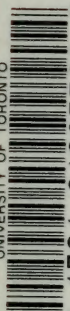


# A MOTOR SCAMPER 'CROSS CANADA

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PERCY GOMERY


UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO



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# A Motor Scamper 'Cross Canada

A HUMAN - INTEREST NARRATIVE  
OF A PATHFINDING JOURNEY FROM  
MONTREAL TO VANCOUVER

BY  
PERCY GOMERY

*Percy Gomery*

194518  
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## DEDICATION

To Doctor Perry E. Doolittle, Toronto, who has given so many years of his leisure life in the interests of automobiling in Canada and particularly in the direction of bringing about a trans-Canada highway, this non-serious work on the subject is respectfully dedicated by—

THE AUTHOR.



## MOTIF

"I believe that a properly-developed motor road from coast to coast in Canada, by forest, river and mountain, and connected up by boat across Lake Superior, possesses natural advantages so far ahead of any other transcontinental route that it is destined to become the great automobile outing on this hemisphere."—*From an address before the Annual meeting of the Vancouver Automobile Club, February, 1921.*



## THE EXCUSE

Although the official pathfinder for "The King's International Highway" (one day to become the King's Canadian Highway), the experiences of our car were those that come to the average motorist who attempts a long tour of his own directing from the atlas and the compass.

The almost impassable country on the Upper Ottawa is now, according to advice from the Ontario Government, being roaded, and the extensive dip into Washington State will shortly be unnecessary owing to further road building in British Columbia. With these exceptions, and from carefully gathered information on other roads, I conscientiously recommend this northern route as probably the best available trans-continental road to-day, as it is without doubt the shortest, coolest and practically the only one free from desert areas.

A professional pathfinder would make this work bristle with the exceptional and sensational, but I have endeavored rather to depict the actual experiences and mental processes, under the circumstances, of Mr. Man-of-the-World, with special application to Mr. Man-of-the-World and his wife.

The book is not a treatise for experts, but was perpetrated rather for the everyday motorist who has planned for or even is interested in the crossing of the Continent.

A silk purse is not made of a sow's ear nor a sow's ear of a silk purse. In sympathy with most normally-minded drivers, I was timid at my first crossing of the mountains; lived through the stage of being terribly weary in body; got tired of the shadeless prairie at times; was sick of the whole thing at least once; and, just as surely, was educated and compensated for it all in the end.

Vancouver, September 5th, 1922.

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# A MOTOR SCAMPER

## 'CROSS CANADA

### CHAPTER I.

#### FAREWELL TO MONTREAL

" . . . I clean forgot that I once went free  
When a little bird came and sang to me.  
Short was his song and of scanty art,  
But it brought the red blood back to my heart;  
For 'twas never a hymn nor a true love ode,  
But the song, the song of the dusty road.  
I've bartered my sheets for a starlit bed,  
I've sold my meat for a crust of bread,  
I've changed my book for a sapling cane  
And I'm off to the end of the world again."

"Well, we're away, old top!"

My wife—intimately "the Skipper"—was bravely attempting cheerfulness. This continent-beating stunt had no charm for her. She had opposed it in thought and deed if not in word. She liked driving around the park, but tired fearfully on long runs. She liked cabarets, but hated camp. There were a dozen really pleasant things we could have done with my long leave of absence, but motoring back to our home on the Pacific Coast was not one of them. The little woman

even disliked the motoring outfit which became her so well. She shrank from the whole prospect.

"In the old prairie-schooner days," I remarked that eventful morning, "how many of the women started out with the idea that they liked it."

"I suppose," the Skipper shook her head in mock bitterness, "it was the same foolish old notion: they'd rather sit at John's elbow than in the Senate."

Over my shoulder I looked back for a last peep at Mount Royal and the towers of Notre Dame, also to hide the look of conceit which I might well have saved myself, because I know now that my wife was coming simply because she believed I needed a keeper. Many a husband smirks to think his wife is following him about in hero-worshipping frame of mind, whereas she regards him only as a candidate for the "harmless" ward.

It had not seemed so serious when, a year or two earlier, I had first talked of going east to motor back over the much-photographed Lincoln Highway. The Skipper even considered, then, the possibility of allowing me to travel with another man.

You have all seen those "highways" lauded and magnified by a big, fat, red streak across the map of North America. It is certainly comforting to look at and to see how simple and safe it is all going to be. There could scarcely be any excuse for getting lost on that wide red road. I never see one of those painted roads now without thinking, "Wide is the

gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat."

My first backsliding from this inviting broad path was a plan for rounding the Chicago end of Lake Michigan and nicking a corner off St. Paul on the straightest route to Manitoba.\* Several cars had travelled from Winnipeg to Vancouver; nevertheless such a diversion was viewed with narrow-eyed suspicion by the Skipper. Under cross-examination guide-books could not be produced, and there were no big, snake-like colored streaks to steer a fellow to a large city on a dark night. It was taking silly chances.

Just as the Skipper was trying to decide between a stern refusal and apron-strings I learned by chance that the Ontario Government was about to cut through a new road north of Lake Huron. At once my guardian recognized the sting of another busy little bee in my bonnet.

False instinct told me that there must be some sort of road paralleling the Ottawa River, also wagon tracks south of Lake Superior. Here, then, was a chance to strike a feasible, if uncharted, path due west from Montreal, splitting the Great Lakes at Sault Ste. Marie, and thus suggest a new transcontinental route all the way. That rattle-brained frenzy settled the matter. The Skipper would just as soon have sent our four-year-old daughter alone across the tracks of the C.P.R. terminals for a bottle of milk, as to risk

\*At that time it was impossible to drive a motor car north of Lake Huron.

her plump little husband out there amongst the elephants and lions all by himself.

So here we were, on June twenty-third, at the great parting of the ways. Out from Montreal eighteen miles, the beautiful summer homes on Lake St. Louis' shores had brought us to the quaint stone building in which Tom Moore wrote:

Faintly as tolls the evening chime  
Our voices keep tune and our oars keep time.  
Soon as the woods on the shore look dim  
We'll sing at St. Anne's our parting hymn.  
Row, brothers, row; the stream runs fast,  
The rapids are near and the daylight's past.

Especially responsive were we to the lines at the song's end:

Saint of this green isle, hear our prayers—  
Oh, grant us cool heavens and favoring airs.

Here at St. Anne we bargained with rival boatmen to be ferried to an island in the St. Lawrence; a mile around it, and more bargaining to get to Vaudreuil, this being the one and only method whereby an automobile can leave the metropolis of Canada for the Golden West.

Then, in the forks of the two great rivers, we stopped a minute gazing down the two alternative roads—to the left via the clear, green St. Lawrence to Toronto, the Niagara "Garden of Canada," Chicago and the fat red streak; to the right, the clean, but bark-brown Ottawa, leading to the capital a hundred miles away—but after that the dark. It seemed like

choosing between civilization and the primeval, between the known and the unknown.

As I swung the car inertly to the right just the faintest sigh came from the passenger by my side.

Probably few prospects in America are more pleasing than the wide sweep of the Lake of Two Mountains from its grove-and-garden shores of luxurious cottages that reflect the wealth of a great city. Under the cool, drooping elms of a silver-belled convent, around and around which pale-faced nuns trod with impersonal faithfulness, we stopped to eat the lunch prepared by loving hands.

"What did you make of their good-bye?" I asked bluntly.

"I couldn't tell if they quite knew whether to laugh or cry," said the Skipper. "The women think it's just foolishness, I fancy; but I'm sure your brothers say it is downright malicious."

"Why waste time guessing?" I sympathized. "When we know we're going to look and sound more or less foolish for the next month we might as well enjoy it."

"Enjoy looking foolish?" round-eyed.

"Decidedly! Enjoyment is purely an attitude of the mind. That philosopher who said we could get used to hanging might have gone the whole way and said we could enjoy it. I know a man who revels in sleeping out in snowdrifts, and certainly to millions of people being washed and clean would be most un-

enjoyable. All but very selfish and artificial people I've talked with have enjoyed being poor. Now, this pennant on the car that you hate—it is going to tap for us a bottomless granary of human nature kernels."

"I'll wait and see how you enjoy looking foolish," she nodded.

Just then a member of the Automobile Club of Canada came whirring along over that matchless road and stopped. I had got out to make sure of a strap on a shock-absorber, being still a little old-maidish about things being right. I had always thought it necessary, when planning a fifty-mile run to-morrow, to spend to-day tapping the wheels with a sledge hammer, giving the works the once-over with a divining rod and silver-polishing the exterior. Little did I vision that, within a week, I would start out at day-break into infinity without even looking into the radiator.

The polite driver had stopped because he noticed an automobile club emblem and acknowledged the freemasonry that exists between club members the world over.

"Want any help?" he enquired jovially.

"No, I guess not, thanks." I was waiting for him to notice the pennant so that I could enjoy looking foolish. He did not see it.

"The *Gazette* says that chap from British Columbia is starting away to-day. A man must be a darn fool not to go to places by the regular roads."

I ventured to raise my glance as far as the Skipper. My lecture was taking root; already she was able to enjoy seeing me look foolish.

"My wife has been saying so," I encouraged him.

"Crazy notion! If he ever gets to North Bay he's lucky."

I was so busy watching the Skipper enjoy herself that I had no answer to this. The polite one's starter spun, he groaned into second and swung past us.

"Well, you think you can get home all right, eh?" he nodded back.

"O, sure! We're just going to Vancouver."

I endeavored to hurl this into the teeth of both of the unconscious conspirators.

## CHAPTER II

### THE FIRING-LINE OF NEW FRANCE

"Thank you, good old Province of Quebec!" said the Skipper as our car literally bumped off into Ontario after fifty-five miles of perfect motoring from Montreal. "I wonder what made us imagine the French-Canadians were slow?"

Practically half the entire length of the King's International Highway from New York to Vancouver follows by lake and river. Just after crossing the Ontario line—and being, as I said, dropped literally into the mud and stones with indecent haste—we stopped to view the sullen might and grandeur of the great Carillon dam. A few miles farther up we espied a low point of land across the broad river and stopped a while to contemplate this fatal spot, glorious in Canadian history. Only a day or two previously we had witnessed the unveiling in Lafontaine Park, at Montreal, of a monument, long delayed, to the immortal Dollard, who, with his tiny army in the long, long ago, saved Canada on this spot.

In the spring of 1660, when the population of Canada was only seventeen hundred souls, the struggling colony on the St. Lawrence was warned of a gigantic Indian invasion bent on its extermination.

The pious young Dollard and seventeen companions offered to place themselves between the red horde and the life of New France. After the last sacrament and earthly farewells the band went forth and erected a fort yonder right in the path of the screaming, blood-thirsty hundreds. At the end of a three-day assault the last of the valiant French had breathed his last and the frenzied Indians were inside the fort mutilating the redoubtable dead.

But the toll taken by the arquebus, of the arrow and tomahawk was so ruinous; the courage of this mere handful of the whites so terrifying to the dejected chiefs from the north and west, that they turned their canoes homeward and the defenceless colony was saved.

Stopping at the village of Plantagenet for our evening meal, we again experienced that feeling which might be called modesty, if it was not pure terror.

"Tourists?" They asked. "Where are you bound for?"

"Ottawa," I replied to be well within the mark, and willing to forego the enjoyment of looking foolish for this once.

Next morning we entered the beautiful capital of the Dominion and there experienced our first pang of amusement at unearned publicity. The morning paper had announced us as "A party of literary men," the evening editions claiming a more life-like picture by virtue of the reporter having viewed me in the flesh at the Board of Trade offices. Hospitality, we were informed, would be limited only by the time we stopped. Personally I am very fond of being fed at somebody

else's expense, but the Skipper prefers peace with frugality. So, after being shown the many lovely spots in the well-watered suburbs and a quiet tea at the club, a most efficient and considerate official escorted us ten miles on our way. Not content with this, he notified villages ahead to be on the watch for us and to render all assistance.

Amongst its other engrossing features, the Ottawa River has long been the frontier battle-ground of the English and French languages. At one point it will be found that French has crossed to the Ontario shore and established a permanent footing, while at another, English not only holds its own, but has crossed into Quebec and captured villages and districts of considerable importance. It is a curious development, however, that this French language, apparently quite ruled out of the courts of business by its hopeless minority on this continent, is nevertheless always gaining ground along its every frontier; and its outposts are successful wherever established. Moreover, we were later to find that the spheres of influence of the French populations in Southern Manitoba and Northern Alberta are ever widening.

The first fifty miles above the capital turned out to be a particular stronghold of our own language on both sides of the river. For sixty miles below Ottawa the roads had been of all sorts—which is almost an admission that they were bad—but here we found them of smooth, dustless velvet and laid amongst the most prosperous-looking farms we were to see from Atlantic to Pacific.

Gliding along under such happy conditions, we naturally asked the question: Are the good roads the outcome of prosperity, or is the prosperity the outcome of the good roads? Being of a modern epoch, one ventures to say that the prosperity is debtor to the roads. Under the old order of transportation, a rail or coach road was achieved only when forced by the stubborn march of population. Under the new order population exists only in the vision of the empire-builder, who forthwith puts through the railway which is to feed on the prosperity of people to come. One wonders if it would not be business to build highways in the same way. It would seem at any rate that the government or local council which waits for prosperity to come along and build the roads is in reality expecting the wheat to start and till the fields.

Pulling into the active lumbering town of Renfrew, on our second evening out from Montreal, we found ourselves opposite the historic Quebec village of Portage du Fort, where Samuel de Champlain, the founder of Canada, on his first voyage of discovery in 1615 (five years before the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock) stopped to make preparations to overcome the turbulent rapids. The Skipper and I, our bodies silhouetted against the western shore, and rising to our full dignity as modern trail-blazers, metaphorically stretched a hand across the river, seized the ghostly, beaded gauntlet of the intrepid explorer with the words: "Samuel, we greet thee as a brother."

## CHAPTER III

### L'HOTEL DE GEHENNA

One's first long motor tour is really a long-lived bridge of sighs. You sigh inwardly of troubles and hazards to come, and you sigh outwardly of those over which you have laid the dust of your hind wheels. For example, the first great sigh—one very hard to stifle—is at the realization of possible failure to complete what your friends know you have started. No use cajoling yourself with "Hundreds of folks do it: they all get through to the Coast," for the merest peep into motor lore will disclose flies in the ointment of touring fiction, even as ever so short an actual contact with a pictured road brings out its *seamy* side. As a matter of cruel, unadorned fact, many less than half of the brave attemptors at spanning the Continent ever reach their goal as planned.

Just before leaving Vancouver we pored over a book describing a tour from New York to San Francisco—the only volume on this theme of which we could learn—in which the author coolly admitted having shipped himself and his car for two hundred miles in Ohio and again for eight hundred miles in the desert and mountains. Moreover, the writer tells how he approached the railway shipping-clerk at the point

where the spirits of his party had ebbed to extinction. He timidly asked if it was practicable to load an automobile in that freight yard.

"Sure!" laughed the agent, whipping out his book, "they all ship from here."

Then there are the newspaper stories of dear old ladies of eighty who motored from coast to coast "Without any ill effect," "Not a moment's nervousness," and in fact any head lines the reporter supposes will adorn his tale. Since trying the thing ourselves we are inclined to point the finger of shame at these unenterprising journalists, who might just as well have said that grandma did it without a wink of sleep or a bite to eat.

In my simplicity I quoted one of these woman-wonder yarns to Mr. A. F. Bement, vice-president of the Lincoln Highway Association.

"Who was that?" he asked, sharply and suspiciously.

"Just forget the name at the moment!" I said, "but one of those women we read about every week or so motoring to the Pacific."

"I think you can safely leave her out of your notes," Mr. Bement smiled. "We have records in this office of every woman who has driven a car across the continent. There are less than half a dozen of them."

Some acquaintances of the Skipper's and mine started out with a fine flourish and a high-powered car. They travelled at first in great leaps of 175 to 225 miles a day. Then, in the middle west, they slowed

down and began stopping off a day or two or even longer as the driver's wife threatened to break down under the strain. Nevertheless not one movement of the lips or quivering of an eyelash betrayed their inner fears as that high-powered car snaked its way up towards the timber-line and doubled on its trail around the Bitter Root Mountains in Montana. But months later my friend the driver wrote this to an enquirer: "If you're motoring into the mountains just leave all your nerves behind you on the farm. It's no place to take nerves!"

At any rate that party actually turned, and came all the way back from a place less than five hundred miles short of the coast—a spot which, had they only known it, marked absolutely the end of their troubles. The many and lengthy laughs the Skipper and I had at this recollection proved a splendid "Dutch courage," and we allowed our friends' blue funk to affect us no more than all the horror stories and fatalities with which an attentive public steadily and dutifully plied us for the couple of months when it would do the most good.

But on that lovely June morning when we drove out of hospitable Renfrew, we were due for an important sigh—inwardly.

I had written many inquiries in advance as to possible routes and roads—if any—through parts of the country not covered by guide books. The more replies we got the worse that Upper Ottawa road sounded. Even the absence of some replies seemed to shout back its uncertainties. One authority at

North Bay said it could be done. Another said it couldn't. The Ottawa Board of Trade believed it "might be feasible in dry weather," and Pembroke came along with a detailed description, section by section, of the road—the outcast among roads—except the sections they did not know about!

None of my advisers, however, seemed to know of anybody who had ever driven a car through it. In Montreal the secretary of the Automobile Club of Canada at first said he had no record of the Pembroke-Mattawa road, but further excavation in the curiodrawer revealed the name of one real live victim of it.

"What did he say?" I asked, as though speaking of one since adjudged insane.

The secretary grimaced as he recalled the thing. "Never again," he quoted, refusing to elaborate on so shocking a subject.

As the pleasant farms and countryside rolled by that morning, I cheered myself again with: "But I've heard quitters say, 'Never again' for a mud-hole or a stone-pile. If one unwinged mortal has done it—"

At Pembroke a brother bank manager informed me that a local celebrity and an emperor of good fellows had made plans to accompany us part way into this chamber of horrors. Unfortunately, he whispered, the celebrity had just had a "holiday," and he could not be quite sure as to his fitness or preparedness. After visiting the emperor I decided for myself. And my solid prohibition vote was nailed to

the radiator cap so to speak as I tanked up the reserve gasoline cans, looked to the other life-saving apparatus and from civilization sailed away on a lovely summer's day.

Ten miles along we passed through Petawawa and, as though to tantalize us to the stinging-point, the roads through the military encampment were of a faultless tar macadam. At the boundary, however, we just pitched off and were confronted with a wilderness of sandy plains laid out in a network of trails neatly arranged, like tangled string. It was inevitable that we should take a few wrong ones and we were lucky that, by judicious use of the compass, our errors cost us only a few miles.

Although of sand, these roadways were not those "sands of the desert" which romantically are supposed to grow cold, but which generally only smother the wheels and leave the engine to grow cold. There was a rank growth everywhere, but in the wheel-tracks. Although wavy like the great sweeping roll of the ocean is wavy, the trail must have been fast, for our car raced a westbound freight on the C.P.R. with success for several miles. In fact we quite made friends with the engineer and fireman. We came so close to them that they read the pennant "Montreal to Vancouver" and offered us their kindest—though badgering—good wishes.

Beyond Chalk River we entered wooded roads, sometimes abominable and again over a pillow of pine needles, soft and silent as a billiard table.

After passing a store and a few farms we began to realize that we were in a roadless country, practically uninhabited. As a matter of fact our course went eighty or ninety miles without a gasoline supply of any sort, and one hundred and fifty miles without a garage.

Progress became retarded. About seven o'clock, after five or ten miles in a dense, silent forest, we emerged all in a moment on a bridge under which the brown, turbulent waters of the Ottawa surged in the Rapides des Joachims. The village of that name was just around the corner and it happened that the chief citizen and his son came upon us as we waited.

These men stopped and spoke to us politely and patiently. Nevertheless, knowing that they knew what we could not know about the hotel, we've never forgiven them for not inviting us to their house, which was the one decent, painted one in that drab, wormy clearing in a wilderness of water and wood.

A blind man would have known that that hotel was bad, if his nose and ears were doing business, but we were the sort of people who have to eat the whole egg to know that it is old. The obvious course was to use our excellent camping equipment, but—sigh outwardly!—at the end of a nerve-and-liver-racking day, stitched in unescapably by strange, unfriendly hills, and no alternative tenting-ground than a foreign-speaking village, into which a stream of loutish lumber-jacks is moving for the Saturday night spree—why! we were nervous about it, that's

all. The consideration was not so much a matter of safety, as sleep. Without adequate sleep the fuse that fires the motorist's ardor will soon dampen and sputter to a fruitless end.

So we passed through a double line of degenerate-looking half-breeds, the target of their muddy eyes, to our room.

"Room!" The upper portion of the building was merely an unfinished, dirty loft, unlighted and quite unfurnished, except for one or two shake-downs, on top of which a weary logger could throw his blankets. Partitioned off at one end was a space containing bedroom furniture on a floor that snapped like a noisy haycart. The only funny thing that happened was our attempt to dine. The hour being "ginning-up" time, unremunerative food-selling was out of the question, so we produced our last hope, our card-up-the-sleeve, the apple of our eye—which happened to be a cantaloupe. But a cantaloupe needs a knife and spoons and these were packed away in the dunnage-bags, so we called the proprietor's daughter, who spoke not a word of English. I smiled on her, made motions around the fruit, and opposed her hesitation by insisting that to "manger" it was "bonne." A friendly, intelligent, yes, a grateful, light showed; she stretched out her hand, accepted the lucious sphere and, bowing herself out, grinned, "Merci, monsieur, merci!"

Our wooing of the god Morpheus was an amateur effort of the rankest kind, compared to the wooing of the god Bacchus by the lords of the forest in the bar-room just beneath those creaking boards. I must

admit that the occasional concerted rendering of one of the old French-Canadian *chansons* lent a picturesque air, but these were outnumbered, and out-hollered, by strictly up-to-date and strictly unprintable songs of the rivermen.

I cannot say that the night hung heavily, because nothing is more enlivening than a series of fights which you hear, but cannot see, and the frequent smashing of bottles proved at least that interest was not flagging. About two o'clock Sunday morning the revellers went their noisy, uncertain way, and in the ensuing silence the ringmaster of our fortunes heralded for our entertainment and edification an occupant of one of the frame shake-downs under the ennobling influence of a playful attack of the D.T.'s. At least the gentleman should have been an occupant of his bed, but he preferred to roll around the loft, muttering to himself and knocking things about. I must admit that a certain familiar little machine with a streaked, blue barrel, close to my hand, was not the most uncomfortable of my realizations each time our fellow guest rolled or crashed against our flimsy door.

Sleep no longer interested us; so about six o'clock we dressed. Always to the rescue with her irrepressible sense of humor, I noticed the Skipper laughing loudly, as she pointed out the window and referred to a certain luxurious hotel of our recent experience. "Variety is certainly the spice of life. I've been wondering if I smelled straight."

Immediately underneath was that poetic construction known as a piggery, with several over-nourished couples securely imbedded in the mud and just tuning up their snouts for another grumbling day.

Yawningly, we loaded our things back into the car. Our host, in language solicitous and violent, dilated on his admittedly unsuccessful efforts to give us a peaceful night. We thanked him and started out to encounter the real perils and troubles of path-finding.

## CHAPTER IV

### MOTORING WITHOUT ROADS.

From observations with the naked eye one should judge that the location of the Upper Ottawa River is due to a geological "fault." The Quebec or northern side is almost mountainous, while the Ontario or southern side is flat or only hilly. (Contrary to common opinion, the Ottawa flows due east some hundreds of miles to Montreal.) For fear that I should some day have a distant relative in the Ontario Government, I'll pretend that the "fault" for the road of this noble river is also attributable to geology—though if, for the offence, geology sits up in its grave and smites me with a Palæozoic boulder, I have no case for the police court.

From that gay caravansary at the Rapides to Mattawa—where we parted company with the river and made a bee-line for Georgian Bay—is fifty-six miles. Of this we covered twenty-nine miles the first day and twenty-eight the second, working hard all day.

Things went reasonably well for a few miles, our main difficulty being to follow the road at all. And, when I say that there is no other road for a hundred miles to the south and unspeakable miles to the north,

you will know what I mean. Repeatedly during those days I had to get out and skirmish around to find traces of a road at all, and, just as often, the car slipped away unconcernedly until it came to a halt in a marsh or against a stubborn concealed log, so suddenly that the Skipper generally bit her tongue trying to ask: "Oh, *where* is my wandering car to-night?"

About eleven of the clock on that sweltering morn, on an eighteen per cent. grade of sand and rocks, we stuck like a postage stamp. Use of tree-boughs, stones, chains and block-and-tackle availed nothing. Two hours of grovelling in my undershirt, camouflaged by a complete facial mask of dusty grease; then a tiny light in the place where my wits ought to have been. Hind legs foremost, down to the bottom I let the car slide and rather easily found a trail by which I could circumvent the hill altogether. But hard work is seldom unrewarded: I had some little unworthy satisfaction in beckoning to the surprised Skipper from on high, to gather up the mosquito-netting, the cushion and the novel and to fill her boots with sand while she breasted that villainous hill, perspiring a little herself in reaching me.

At noon we took a short side path to the river at Stonecliff, a village thrown like a handful of white pebbles on the steep bank. We lunched at a surprisingly good hotel which we learned was kept up by Boston and New York sportsmen. But our car—a very unremarkable one indeed—was exciting interest which puzzled us until the proprietor said it

was the first that had ever driven to his door. His five-year-old son had never seen an automobile.

As the world is said to grow more giddy and dangerous with the declining sun, that execrable road did the same. For miles together it was just a succession of hidden mines into which the car plunged every few yards. Rank growth of years of grass hid both the pits and the huge rocks that threatened to tear the in'ards out of the engine if it was moving more than about two miles an hour. As it was, the car was buffeted about brutally and so frequently was something being bent or smashed that it ceased to be a matter of comment. Then would come an awful hill, a sort of precipice cut into broad steps on which were strewn boulders about the size of perambulators. Now and then we would gain a height from which we could look a mile or two ahead over a peopleless wilderness of foliage, with just the suggestion of a different shade of green showing where once a road clearing had been made.

"Is that where we've got to go?" the Skipper would groan. And the steersman, answered he never a word! The only reliable thing in that part of the country was our compass. For long distances I dared not get away from low gear and for ten continuous miles of churning we did not go above intermediate for half a mile. When I tried to be entertaining by narrating that we were following the path of the first white expedition ever to penetrate this continent, the Skipper unsmilingly glanced up and down our

line of progress and dryly remarked that it had evidently been some years since it passed.

After dodging fallen trees, raising others and repairing bridges, I miscalculated the height of a suspended trunk and the car top was torn off. The only thing in our favor was the weather and, about five o'clock, it commenced to rain. We cast longing eyes at a rather homey boarding-house at Deux Rivières station (the first hamlet in twenty-five miles), but decided to push on for Mattawa.

Immediately away from the houses we passed into the woods again, there being no habitations or buildings whatever for fifteen miles. However, several miles along, the wheels dug their way into hopeless mire and insisted on calling it a day. I think a shovel would have saved us that night, but it was missing from our kit.

Sadly, we fished out the very necessities, including the typewriter, and left our desolated little home with its broken running-board, broken spring, broken lamps, flattened gas-tank, bent windshield and smashed top to the mercy of the rain and started back for Deux Rivières. Our arms were full of parcels; it was wet and hot; the mosquitoes were eating us alive and we were desperately tired. Several times the Skipper became hysterical. I comforted her as well as I could; in fact I recall telling her how these hardships could only make us better pals.

We are just a plain pair of mortals, the Skipper and I. While I have not succeeded in rising to the demonstrative affection of the Petticoat Lane English-

man who beats his wife, we nevertheless do from time to time test our friendship in one of the more simple ways becoming to our social station. But ever since our long trek together we know that a silver lining or trimming can in a moment be given to any threatening group of domestic clouds by flashing upon it any one of the seven suns—or is it seventy times seven—representing the “hot times” of those eventful weeks.

A curious aftermath has been that, whereas the days of ease and nights of entertainment seem now mere drab and commonplace, the hours of anxiety and suffering become, in retrospect, precious links in our regard for one another. What chance for distinction has a disagreement over an invitation or a spat about the dinner hour when there enters the ring the ghost of things worth while, called up by magic names like The Secretan Hills, The Shack on the Great Snake, Vantage Ferry, Rapides de Joachim, Deux Rivières?

Many there be who warn, “It’s no experience to give your wife,” but we know better.

That night, after a kind landlady—you simply can’t avoid kind people when you are in touring trouble—had helped me get the Skipper to bed, I walked half a mile to arrange for a team to come and pull us out next morning, then trudged back to go to bed. It was part of my creed never to admit fatigue, but on this occasion I was wet, grimy, foot-sore and dejected, and had had no sleep for forty hours. Then I caught sight of the wee typewriter, suddenly remembered my various newspaper contracts

calling for a two thousand word letter a week, and that to-morrow would be too late for Saturday's issue.

Wearily I arranged the carbons, metaphorically put on my jester's costume, and proceeded to inform the motoring public of the cities of Canada and New York what a blithesome lark it is to wheel across the continent on a new road.

When your luck starts to skid it generally slips on to the day's end. At half-past one, when I had scratched my hands on a mountain of cinders on the way up to the railway station post box and torn my trousers on a barb-wire fence on the way back, I looked up at the clouds and managed to see just one or two stars between.

I claim a smile for noticing that there were still one or two stars.

## CHAPTER V

### OFF THE GREASY POLE—INTO THE MUD

*Road*: a land surface so prepared as to carry travellers and vehicles.

*Trail*: an indicated line of travel by land.

To the road traveller the patter of rain by night is a harbinger of cool, dustless morning, clean, shiny vegetation, and a smiling land. But uneasy rests the head that trips the trail.

Each time I was awakened by the spectres of yesterday's thumps into pitfalls, or crunching of rock on metal, I hearkened to the deluge. Six inches at a time our abandoned car sunk into the ooze and my last dream of its resting place was a gutter of slime through the forest, its surface broken only by a flapping end of rubberized cloth, which was in fact the wrecked top of our illfated chariot!

The song-birds and sunshine of eight o'clock did not deceive us. We knew very well our "road" had gone just like the ice in summer. At the end of a three-mile convulsive voyage on a springless wagon I learned how a "pinch" of a new-felled tree against a base of specially imported gravel and boulder rescues a drunken motor car from a muddy death, and how horse flesh laughs at gasoline. Standing

aside meekly, the wee typewriter in hand, I philosophized that, though the pen is mightier than the sword, occasion arises when the axe and the shovel out-mighty them both. An axe we had, the shovel we then and there bargained for.

Leaving our good friends—any four men and two horses who give up the day saving your life for four dollars are surely friends—we received this good advice: "When you mire again you'd best walk ahead and get the road gang working near Mattawa."

"Cheerful!" observed the Skipper, certainly not appreciative of the childlike faith unconsciously expressed in us by our adviser. For Mattawa was twenty miles away.

At the first dry spot we stopped and put on the tire chains. "Why weren't they on last night?" we asked each other. However the "Whys" of a long-distance motor tour are about as numerous as gas-stations, except that in this wilderness gas-stations were just eighty-two miles apart.

The receipt for trundling an automobile from Deux Rivieres to Mattawa is, "Half a league, half a league, half a league onward," and keep repeating the process all day, also the name of the place they rode "Back from the jaws of. . . ." There is no sign of civilization—just that eternal grass-grown trail winding now over flowery hills or firm sod, now into the dark terror of wooded swamp. In one of these we found the remains of an ancient bridge. Stepping on the last remaining plank, it crumbled like punk into the creek. The three stringers or cross-beams

were still apparently solid, for our combined stamping weight failed to break them. I managed to collect enough wood to join two of the stringers. This provided passageway for the right side wheels, but the two left side tires must needs trace a dead-line across the six-inch flat hewn top of the third stringer. The Skipper got out and directed operations. Several times I made the front wheel walk the plank; but, as the rear one did not hit the dead centre of that spindly stick, I had to back off again and down the road to get a new bead on the bulls-eye, and incidentally more beads on my forehead. Once the rear wheel was well on to the stringer it would be almost impossible to back off.

Finally, my eyes bulging so you could snare them, I crept across that air-line. From my seat, the car was surely without visible means of support, and as, keyed to the snapping point, I listened for the slipping crash that would have meant a wreck practically irretrievable, my feelings need not be described.

We made it. The bridge—should I say the missing bridge?—occurred at the seventh mile out from Deux Rivières. I remember that perfectly because, a hundred yards farther on, just as our pulses were coming to normal, we paused gracefully and finally in mud as deep as it was black. The occasion is notable as being the only time from Atlantic to Pacific when the car mired with the chains actually in use.

The air was suddenly sweltering. In those breezeless bullrushes ancient Egypt's plague of flies descended upon us. The thing was hopeless; we

seemed to be only at the beginning of the swamp anyway. Taking the Skipper to some higher, airier land ahead I left her, I hoped comfortably, with a rug, a book, mosquito netting, the revolver and such oddities, while I started for help. I told her there was no danger, but I omitted to tell her that the country we were in was famous for big game. I had not the vaguest notion of where or how far I would have to go for help, but I had a valuable asset. I commenced to run. As a distance runner I trace my descent from Hamilton, Ontario, that home of world-famous marathoners. I never succeeded in winning a place in a marathon race in Hamilton, but, boastfully, in the forty-year class, I'll take on any man of my weight on that Deux Rivieres trail.

Five miles I ran. Five miles sounds a mere automobile step, but five separate miles, when they carry you through the mud of dank valleys and over hills as meaningless in outlook as the swamps, are about as short as five sleepless nights. And when you are running away from your wife back there, all alone amongst—well, amongst her fears, at least, your common sense tells you. At last, at very long last, a clearing and a log farm-house. Two small boys stared to see the wildly hurrying figure from the dark woods, and came eagerly forward. Yes, they had horses. Father was away, but the big Small Boy and the little Small Boy said they could handle them.

Waiting for nothing else, I set off, happy at least that, ever since the marathon days, I had had a run of some sort practically every day of my life. My

natural fears found a climax when I saw, where I had left them, the rug, book and umbrella, but no wife. Dashing on down the trail, my shouts were at last answered. At this distance of time I rather hesitate to record my exact emotions on hearing that answering call, but the sight of the miserable, terrified Skipper, enveloped in tears, mosquitoes and the stifling heat of the swamp, struck me only as a matter for thanksgiving.

A heavy crackling and rustling movement of the bushes at her back had frightened her to the supposed safety of the car, from where the racing of the engine would dismay the black terror. It may or may not have been a bear, but in several Ontario newspapers the "Ayes" had it.

When the Small Boys—what plucky little beggars they were!—arrived and hitched their team to the front axle our hopes advanced. But the car stood firm! We tried starting those equines from low gear and from high, both together, one at a time, and one after the other, but the obliterated tires refused to stir. We tried a push-and-pull combination, two horses and the big Small Boy forward, the little Small Boy, the Skipper and myself aft. The latter crew worked semi-floating on pontoons. I conjured up all known devices, including the carrot on the fishing pole and the fire underneath, but our four-wheeled mule just stood. Meantime we were tormented in the heat and mud. Mosquitoes and insects left huge lumps and welts that showed on our faces and arms for a week afterward.

"Aw, dang it! If dad was here he'd make 'em pull ye out," the big Small Boy half wept. I had realized the probable truth of this for some time, but assured the big Small Boy it was not so. In response to the sudden chatter of a squirrel in his ear the "haw" horse bolted for the stable, but only got far enough to break a tug-strap. Luckily our tool kit (I should say tool "cat," as only a fair-sized trunk would have held it) contained some hay-wire. Unlucky the trans-continentaler who scorns the humble hay-wire. But even hay-wire does not possess motion in itself, and for another half hour the wasps and kindred deadly evils were the only successful operators in that part of the country. I suggested starting the engine to supplement the power.

"O gee!" said the little Small Boy, "them horses'd go crazy."

I had commenced to wonder if they would ever go anywhere. Frankly I did not believe their hearts were in the work. Surreptitiously enquiring the market quotations on harness that got smashed and horses that killed themselves, and taking my cue from the squirrel, I decided we would try it. I might mention that the prolonged view of our trans-Canada flyer moving nowhere except down was peevish me. Inaction is my bugbear. If I could not move the car out of this hell I would try dynamiting hell from under the car. So, smothered by our combined shouting, I started the engine, and lo! our dash for the Pacific North-West had been resumed. When at last we were out of the miserable place the astonished

Clydesdales looked back across each other's ears, considerably insulted, but curious as to how they had been humbugged.

After a few hundred yards we found a spot where it was safe for one horse at a time to stand off the trail while the motor slipped silently down hill alongside him. Then, mighty in the assurance that the rescuing team was following, we negotiated the next five miles on the non-stop plan, if still with numerous breath-holdings.

"Certainly the horse is God's best gift to man," sighed the Skipper.

"You're thinking of the dog, aren't you?" said I, having nothing else to do.

"No, I'm not," emphatically; "I'm thinking of the horse."

## CHAPTER VI

### THE ARK STRIKES ARARAT

Arrived at last, thanks to the gods,  
O'er highways rough and muddy  
(A certain sign that making roads  
Is not this people's hobby)!  
And though I'm not in scripture learned  
I'm sure the guid book says  
That heedless sinners shall be damned  
Unless they mend their ways.

.. —*Bobbie Burns.*

When the big Small Boy and the little Small Boy, peeping from behind their huge horses out of the forest road, had rejoined us, footsore but smiling, there was a sheepish look of surprise in their dirty faces. They probably expected we had gone on without offering to pay, and, when they found us there still, concluded we were killing time talking to their mother.

They were mistaken; we were enjoying the grandest hour of our whole tour. If for nothing else, we were waiting to take the Small Boys' photographs, to keep for the rest of our lives. If somebody, just then, had offered me a permanent job, right by that log-cabin, at a dollar a year "and found" I should have leaped at it.

Half an hour before, after brief civilities to the mother of the Small Boys, we had thrown ourselves

exhausted on the ground. The grass was cool on the hands and neck, making us forget for the moment the painful white welts and lumpy blood-streaked insect bites. The clucking of fowls came pleasantly to us in the shade; cultivated fields and tokens of civilization were about and a sharp breeze brought no mosquitoes to fight. In the *n*th power of relaxation we lay there gazing untroubled into the summer heaven.

"I don't believe there is such a place as this," I drawled, without moving an eyelid.

"No," lifelessly and with delicious sleepiness from the Skipper. "There ain't no sich animal."

"Now, if you would like to come," sounded the angel voice of the Small Boy's mother, "I've got you some homemade bread, tea and a wild-strawberry shortcake, with plenty of cream. And this layer-cake—I don't know whether it will be any good—I started for you whenever the boys went away after your automobile."

"Plenty of cream!" Land o'Goschen, but I did betray my ignorance over that cream! It poured like white golden syrup and I just sat there, mouth open and tongue out, looking very silly and yapping out the wrong thing by way of thanks, like any other city-bred yokel who has had no fetchin' up and doesn't know how to act when he gets out into nature.

"I've been telling my wife," I remarked later, "that she needn't be afraid of any wild animals, even if she is left alone."

"Oh! but she need, then!" promptly replied the mother of the Small Boys. "My sister, who lived over

there less than two miles, had to close up her house and move away because the howling of the wolves at night frightened her that bad."

"Yes," interposed the little Small Boy, "and Johnnie, the Indian, brought home those cubs last week when the old bear got caught in his trap."

"That's so," confirmed his mother. "When Johnnie got around, there were the three little cubs sitting on a bough overhead waiting for mother to get out of the trap."

After making a boldly-pencilled note that the Small Boys were to have a copy of "A Motor Scamper 'Cross Canada," we passed on. This "passing on" is the ruling motif of the long motor tour. When one travels the commercial way, ship or train, he "passes on" from waves and sunsets, or merely places, pictures and people. But when you sit at the throttle yourself, become your own train-despatcher, pathfinder and general chance-taker, you can laugh at time-tables; but time-tables also laugh at you. Ofttimes we had breakfasts at five a.m.—with smells good for a week—dinners at eleven p.m., and for lunch, sometimes, a baked no-nothing with a caraway seed. We hove to at nightfall, absolutely and completely lost, ten miles from a human being.

As to the "passing on," when you take your little compass in hand, by the shore of Sister Atlantic, and undertake to grub a path for yourself to Father Pacific by the agency of your own feelers, dodging en route the world's greatest chain of inland seas, you are likely to find yourself "passing on" from discom-

forts and disappointments, from cold, wet and thirst, from bumps and bites and exasperations plus. You will also, however, be "passing on" from joy unto joy of independence, from the luxury of choosing your own playgrounds, from the discovery that noble men and women dwell in low as well as high places, from the realization that life is not "society," from a living, actual knowledge of your own country, from the inspiration of adventure and from the thrill of achievement.

We are told that "The play's the thing," but I am sorry for the man who thinks it is. Life's the thing, and to buy life by the yard is no more satisfactory than buying travel by the mile. Let him who will travel "de luxe"; I will continue to travel "de bumps"!

From "de bumps," as exemplified in the immortal Small Boys, we passed on to "de luxe" in the shape of a good hotel at Mattawa. The Small Boys we love to recall, but Mattawa—excepting only the hot bath—we are willing to forget.

One of the most interesting studies of our tour was the study of public spirit, personal, municipal and national. Scores of advance letters were written by the Vancouver Automobile Club and public officials, so that every town of importance had the chance to show its interest in the inauguration of "The King's International Highway." I am sorry to have to say that, as I found it, public spirit to the north of the international boundary was no match for the systematized courtesy in the United States. There was, however, a notable exception. Laying myself open to the

charge of barefaced advertising, which, nevertheless, is entirely unsolicited, I found a dependable and marked public spirit anywhere and everywhere that there was an agent of the Imperial Oil Company. I hasten to add that this Company flatly refused my request for a reduction in the price of gasoline! Although I do not intend again to write the name in so many letters, it will be impossible to avoid referring to the innumerable courtesies of its representatives who studied our comforts and furthered our object at every turn.

Considering that Mattawa is possibly the hardest town in the north temperate zone to reach by automobile, and in view of our sufferings that day, I felt a trifle public-spirited myself; so started out after dinner to find a brother booster. But, disregarding the excellent example of Diogenes, I failed to take a lantern; so failed altogether. Apparently nobody in Mattawa cared a "whoop" whether Canada as a whole was breathing its first or its last.

Late in the evening, however, a bright, business-like man came to me and said: "I certainly approve of your auto club's undertaking. I'm the representative of the So-and-so works here. What I want to see are men who will boost for Canada. Let Canada show itself, that's all!" And he was a Samaritan; at least he was an American.

At the end of that awful Pembroke-Mattawa trail, and of that day in particular, we thought our cup of discomfort was full, but the following morning it, in common with everything else, was running over.

What I mean is that it rained just shockin'. "Just shockin'" is book language for something much worse in real life, and it's real life indeed when you are compelled to start out over roads of unknown direction and depth, with the rain falling in blankets and sheets—in fact in pillows and mattresses and all the other heavy bedclothes.

I have recorded how the top of the car had been ripped and the wind-shield pulled askew so that it pointed in every direction except up and down. As I have said, there was no garage for one hundred and fifty miles; so our gaping top still did service as a skylight or a water spout, at the humor of the gods, and the upper and lower windshields fitted about as closely and evenly as a bulldog's front legs.

As, by eleven o'clock, it was plain that delay was useless (clearly it would be raining in Mattawa for at least a fortnight), we got under way. "That was all we did get under," the Skipper laughingly observed. Wet! We got just so wet that we came to giggling over it. Experienced sportsmen will recognize the degree of dampness at once.

Then the tire-chains began slipping off, and the real fun commenced. Getting out in the rain, especially when you are in the rain already, and stamping back two hundred yards through six inches of gumbo is really funny if you can only see yourself as others see you. Then, too, looking for the gray chain in the gray mud can be just as amusing as "Button, button, who's got the button?" Finally, what can be more mirth-provoking than a slightly

rotund and middle-aged gentleman tactfully readjusting the chain on the invisible tire? He throws down a narrow fence rail as a seat and then digs his hands into the slime to locate the axle to be lifted. Meanwhile, from aloft, his lovin' wife passes the time by making up a pool with herself as to whether the fat man or the jack will sink out of sight first. Humor is a matter for those who can appreciate it.

Hardly necessary to record that the road was very heavy. Again and again the car slowed, staggered and sank till hope was at its last flutter, but always we pulled through. Now, each time we did this my highly-trained toes intercepted a faint grinding message from the tire-chains, and suddenly I exclaimed:

"It's all right! There's a bottom to this road. I feel gravel down there, if we haven't got into the bed of a prehistoric river."

This led to the information that we were now on "The Great Northern Road," the Government highway connecting the Ottawa River with the Great Lakes at Sault Ste. Marie. This notable 350-mile stretch is referred to in my notes as "A road founded upon a rock."

"That's fine," chirped the Skipper. Well done, Ontario, Rip Van Winkle of modern road-builders."

## CHAPTER VII

### FRIENDLY NORTHERN ONTARIO

The warmth or chill of one's arrival in a strange town often depends on whether or not you are expected. If, for example, you do not expect to be expected, but find the fire kindled, so to speak, your enthusiasm will glow even in the most barren of places. If, on the other hand, you expect to be expected, but nevertheless are met by the unconcerned stare of so many pairs of glass balls, why, the sight of that city in flames could not cure your cold impression of it.

Though we reached North Bay in the evening, I always think of it as the morning of our joy. Basking proudly on the white-waved shore of Lake Nipissing, its church spires dancing before our eyes in the myriad reflections of the dying sun, it suggested a glorious polished agate set on a slender silver ring, the huge circumference of which faded to east and west on the far horizon.

Stopping at the first garage, our car was recognized (though its own mother would scarcely have done so) and evidently the news was relayed. I had not finished writing our names on the hotel register when a genial voice was heard behind.

"Mrs. Gomery, I believe! As Mayor of North Bay I welcome you to the new Ontario."

From that moment until we left, twenty hours later, we were under a sort of benevolent surveillance, and hospitality knew only one limit—twenty hours. A dinner in our honor was followed by a delightful evening at the mayor's home.

Nailed together somehow and partly watertight, our shipwrecked car was floated out of drydock, run up to the hotel watering trough about three o'clock the next day and, escorted by an ever-thoughtful secretary to the town limits, we "passed on" with hope in our hearts and almost a lump in our throats.

Nobody in North Bay had been more interested than a certain old friend of my youth, now a business man of the neighbourhood. I think Harry had reckoned to motor most places where the presence of a road was suspected, so he asked me;

"Why shouldn't I motor down to Ottawa by this road?"

"Well—because you shouldn't, that's all," I snorted.

"Huh, huh! That's what my friend, the Provincial road superintendent always says—that it's not practical."

"Worse than that," I growled; "it's impossible."

"But you have just done it," grinned my old friend.

"I don't care," I said. "It's impossible all the same."

"Now, how——," exasperating grin.

"Look here, man, don't you make an old ass of yourself. You are out for a week's rambling; I've got somewhere to go —by the Jumping Jehosophat! somewhere I've got to go. When absolutely everything

depends on a fellow covering a certain section of country he tackles the only indicated line of progress in existence, whether it's possible or impossible. In other words there's an 'impossible' for you and an 'impossible' for me, and they're no relation."

That's the cantankerous disposition one gets from globe-trotting on the self-opinionated principle. If somebody assures you that a certain mountain pass "Is perfectly easy, just plain sailing," you write back and tell him it was not so easy at all. And if a dozen wiseacres tell you that such-and-such a thing is impossible you snap your teeth on the bit and start out and do it!

Our well-wishers at North Bay had assured us that, owing to the recent torrential rains, we could not make Sudbury, some hundred miles west, that night. So we did it, just to show them, and we drove ten miles out of our way at one point as well.

After thirty miles of good and bad, we found roads hard as a table, though narrow as a ribbon. The temptation to speed was irresistible, but the risk imminent. In the mining rock formation of the world-famous nickel region hard-road material lies ready to be shovelled into place. Through mile after mile of uninhabited rock hills, that road like a double thread of satin, rises, falls, curves and contorts itself with bewildering accuracy.

Lakes were more common than people, the landscape was free of fences, there were no cars to dispute the road and no traffic cops to watch. In the shadowy stillness of that sunset hour our darting car was the

only thing in motion. The world was ours; thirty-fives miles an hour over that razor-edge of a road. Distinctly I remember being afraid to trust my eyes off it long enough to sneeze.

Of course these new-found luxuries brought their unwelcome reflections. After all, we had not started out on a search for muddy experiences or pleasant musical evenings, but to get from New York and Montreal to Seattle and Vancouver, in a limited time. Up to last night we had been seven days on the way from Montreal and had covered 367 miles. One-tenth of our estimated journey!

Of course there must always be this discouraging moment; that paralysing realization that the lifetime of hardships and annoyances behind (seven days! it might as well be seven years) is a mere six inches on the map. And ahead! Your hand moves with yawning despair across the colored squares, the Great Lakes, the meaningless length of the Prairie, those terrifying ropes of chestnut burrs in mountainous British Columbia. Oh, what a weariness, what a foolhardy quest!

But this is another of the things from which the "passing on" is purely incidental.

A fully-lighted express train glided alongside, coming somewhere from amongst the great pillows of rock, and it was thrilling to find that we could almost hold our own with it. In fact a few miles out of Sudbury we caught up with it again. To be sure the express was probably waiting for orders, but still our conceit and hopes experienced a ten-point rise.

## CHAPTER VIII

### A NIGHT WITH THE ROAD GANG

Ages ago—the decade just prior to the cake-walk age, I think it was—the rage of colo'd musical circles was a refrain,

“I want to go to heaven on a nickel-plated road.

Just push dem clouds away.”

The author doubtless had in mind Sudbury, the only place in the world where nickel comes in road-making quantities.

Sudbury is a city fairly radiating prosperity. Its pavements, street cars and commercial fame bespeak wealth, present, past and to come. The name of its chief hotel, “The Nickel Range” suggests it. We found, there, very high rates and service almost unbelievably poor. Perhaps that is why it suggests wealth—and independence.

Quite early I was awakened by the telephone bell. An officer of the Board of Trade and the president of the automobile club were waiting to see me. This early bird solicitation smacked of a disposition to swallow the worm and have done with it. The courteous gentlemen, with almost oriental politeness, as-

sured us that they, their possessions and the city, were at our command if we would remain a day or two. They deplored North Bay's laxity in robbing them of the honor of going out to meet us last night. The "meet" suggestion sounded as though it might be genuine, but as for the rest, "I am not so sure; he bowed too low," as the Cardinal says in "Richelieu."

Just then the Skipper asided to me. "This is Dominion Day. These men are sure to have made arrangements for it."

"But there is no call for you to entertain us at all, Mr. President." I said, "you probably have other things to do to-day."

"Er——No. Really we are anxious to have you see everything. The Doctor here, and I have nothing to do that could not——."

"Now, I'm sure that both you gentlemen and the other members of your organizations have some family plans for this beautiful holiday," said the Skipper, taking the helm. "Now, haven't you? I'm a mother and I know."

"Well, the kids had thought of some little picnic or something, but——."

"Do you suppose we do not know what a promise to the children means?" the easy tempered officials were interrupted. They blushed—blushed thankfully. "Now that my husband has had the pleasure of meeting you, I know he'd really prefer to be on his way."

That's one manner of making friends.

Before we got away our car required considerable tinkering, for it had already commenced to develop the ailments for which it later became famous. At Mattawa we had taken off, and shipped back for the manufacturers' inspection, a pair of shock absorbers put on a week ago, and which were now pounded to a shapeless mass.

The delay in getting the reader started on the road, in this chapter, although seemingly inexcusable, is perhaps illustrative of the actual and apparently meaningless delays to which the long-distance motorist and his passengers will find themselves subject. However, we will be off presently—and it is going to be a long day.

The outstanding pleasures, and displeasures, of touring are, as I have said, essentially and surely a matter of perspective. Perfect roads, no accidents, and regular hotels would be charming on the days you had them, but fearfully dull and characterless in retrospect. Conversely, an empty stomach, a "Road Closed," a breakdown or a "Babes in the Wood" tableau late at night, are things most emphatically not charming to experience, but which become the charm of your recollections for years afterwards.

When you listen to those fatal words, "You can't get through," do not be downcast. Say to yourself, "Then we *will* get something else: something original and interesting, something that we hadn't counted on."

The noon we left Sudbury we had no suspicion as

to where we should spend the night, which in fact may be said for most of our days. Really, for a month or six weeks, such an existence is almost enchanting adventure.

About six o'clock that evening we had our first view of Lake Huron, from the village of Cutler. The afternoon's run registered ninety miles and prudence suggested a halt. But Prudence has rather a rough time of it in a touring automobile, because the opposing vices, Speed and Greed, work constantly against her. We voted to push on.

Until within a few days of that time there had been no highway thoroughfare from Cutler to Algoma, a distance of eighteen miles. The country here was so difficult that no road had ever been laid out. Our maps showed it as "The Missing Link," and the instructions were to ship by lake steamer from Cutler to Blind River. I saw a photograph of the only car that had ever been brought through "The Missing Link." It was a Ford and was standing literally on its radiator. The story was that five men accompanying this prehistoric pathfinder literally carried the juggernaut no small part of the distance.

But now a series of very capable road-gangs were blasting and shovelling the missing link into its place in the chain, and we were told we might try it.

After a few miles we came upon the first tar-paper and tent settlement of the road builders, and were promptly informed, "You can't get through." Having

heard that tale before, we were disposed to be 'sassy' and to move right ahead, although both evening and rain were falling. For perhaps a mile we followed a roaring stream know as the Great Snake. Then suddenly the gravel, which, though fresh and deep, afforded traction, came to an end and we looked, open-mouthed, up a canal of mud. We paused sadly a moment and, above the patter of the rain, the Great Snake seemed to grind mockingly into our ears, "You can't get through."

"Well, we can go back," offered the Skipper.

"Maybe!" I allowed cautiously, and tried to do it.

When the wheels were backed off the gravel they found about as much traction as on the greasy pole. After half an hour's sleight-of-hand work with rocks and sticks I got the car back on the road, face still forward. The Skipper saw me peering uncannily into the canal ahead and heard the engine roar threateningly once or twice under my foot.

"You're not going to try that, are you?" she asked.

"I won't call it trying, but I'm going in."

"Why, in the world?"

"Well," I reasoned beautifully, "we've got to be towed from here anyway. The only tow we'll take is a forward one, so let's go as far as the good Lord will let us first. We'll have died standing up at least, and there's a chance in a hundred we'll get through."

However the stakes went to the ninety-and-nine, and the Skipper a minute later "took a tow" across

fifty feet of canal, as one muddied oaf was all the pantomime called for.

An umbrella is even a greater wanderer aboard than ashore. We have never been able to keep one, so we were quite wet when we got back to tar-paper city. The population stood at attention. The forty men, it seemed, slept together in a tent about large enough for them if their legs did not mind staying out; the cook, his wife and baby slept in the tiny kitchen; the superintendent slept in his office. Puzzle; where will the visitors go?

I knew the answer, but the superintendent did not at first seem to get it. I thought he was a bit obtuse. However, when I saw the Skipper talking to him and looking that sad-and-all-alone look straight up into his eyes and using that deadly expression I know only too well, I was sorry for him. In fact I was so sorry I would almost have offered to help him carry his things out into the men's tent.

Although the victim of his own gallant nature, I recognized in this man a very prince, but it must have been a sort of shepherd prince to be content with the room we had that night.

From our plain-board shake-downs, which were in opposite corners of the office shack, the Skipper and I exchanged whispered witticisms all night, for we slept not a wink. In road camps they evidently put tea on in the morning and let it boil all day, just taking the dipper off the hook when anybody wants a

drink. By eight p.m., when we filled a flowing bowl, it had got fairly strong and was a splendid sleep-preventative. Door tightly closed (no windows of course), and candle snuffed on account of mosquitoes, it was so inky dark it made an excellent bogey atmosphere. As the rain purred on the tar-paper above us and the Great Snake maintained its cascade-obligato almost underneath us, I heard the irrepressible Skipper hum, "I dreamt I dwelt in marble halls . . . . ."

In spite of my very candid warning that she need not look for a manicure set or panel mirrors this woman, next morning, was unreasonable enough to growl because she had to go out and wash in the tin basin they used with the grindstone. "All the men can see me," she pouted. How fastidious some women are, to be sure.

## CHAPTER IX

### INTO THE MICHIGAN PENINSULA

The road-gang remained idle that drenching morning, but as life, for us, was forward movement the boss ordered two teams harnessed and away we went amid the plaudits, or was it derision of the populace.

The horses dragged our car a quarter of a mile, the men helped me put on the tire chains—four chains, not two—and, giving our car a push down the hill, they left us repeating the well known invocation found on the silver dollar.

It has been a puzzle to me ever since as to how we got through the remaining ten miles of "The Missing Link." The road was mostly graded but not surfaced. That is, the "fills" and hill-cuttings were complete but the absence of gravel left a soft, bottomless mass quite unadapted to motor traction. Of course the grade was soaking wet and deeply fissured by streamlets, or rill-lets or ditch-lets, or at any rate wheel-gravelets.

By manner of emphasizing the newness of it all, the bridges were not yet placed, so we frequently had to turn aside, cross the ditch, drive over a pile of logs or pontoons in the stream and then get back on to the roadway. Each time we sprang at a grassy bank

presenting a short grade of about 40 per cent.\* it seemed certain that the wheels must slip and allow the car to slide back. However, when it did so we just tackled another spot, giving her a little more head, and managed the climb somehow, though it required a swift yank at the steering wheel to prevent spilling down the opposite side of the road into the other ditch. Another car or two abroad that watery dawn to dispute the greasy hog's-back with us, and I think we would all just have lain down in the mud together for company, until road-construction was completed.

At one point we had to ford a sizable creek, but not only was it the most comfortable of these bridgeless crossings; it was also the only occasion when we were obliged to ford any stream.

There were road-gangs every two miles, and they kindly offered help, but we felt that every tow was a blot on our record. Though without a doubt the very presence of these extricators lent us confidence. A group from the last gang we passed congratulated us on being the first car to come through without assistance. We disenchanting them, but thanked them for the compliment just the same.

That morning of teeth-grindings and heart-swallowings demonstrated the absolute indispensability of tire-chains. Sometimes our drive wheels tore holes a foot deep in mud or grass, but we always got through. In Montreal I had equipped with a new set for guaranteed satisfaction. The shock or strain to which

\*The steepest sustained grade a motor car can go up or down is 32 per cent.

a tire-chain will be subject on a long tour is almost impossible to estimate. If you have an old set of your own, as I had, throw them away. You cannot judge to what extent they may be worn or weakened, and their failure even on a single occasion will mean more than the price of new chains.

To Sault Ste. Marie, exactly one hundred miles from the point where we connected up again with an old and hard roadbed, life was just one glorious song, the scenery delightful, everybody's temper seraphic; all nature seemed sublime, and so forth. There is no use asking me. "How do you get that way?" A good road has had the same effect on every motorist.

In the perfect weather of afternoon we sped gaily past pretty farmhouses set in acres of green velvet, smooth forest areas like thick eastern rugs laid heavily on the hillsides, sleepy wayside hamlets, the bustling town of Thessalon and, now and then, glimpses of Lake Huron's waters narrowing swiftly to the great inland keypoint, the once mighty citadel of the Indian nations, Rapids Saint Mary.

Of our reception at this city—the Great Divide of the Great Lakes—I could write a chapter at least but after all it is personal history and scarcely belongs.

Suffice to say that royalty could not have been more graciously and generously received and entertained. Officers of the Automobile Club, the mayor, and other public officials, with their wives, tendered us a formal dinner at the new country club. Meeting one another's eyes a moment through the flowers and cut-glass, the Skipper and I exchanged a meaning glance.

and I could not resist telling our hosts some of the trials of the trails. For example, how, the night previous, we had dined standing up in our muddy, wet clothes, under a greasy rain-soaked canvas, the courses consisting of a doorstep of bread and butter, milkless tea taken from tin bowls and a handful of dripping pie.

Later that evening, after addressing a meeting of the Board of Trade, I enquired the cause for the rush of shipping then glutting St. Mary's River and the Canals.

"That's not a rush," I was told, "When we have ten or twenty steamers waiting to get in we call it busy."

"I suppose the monthly tonnage is considerable," I said.

"About twice the traffic through Suez and Panama combined," was the reply.

Part of the following day I devoted to the Michigan Soo, and was so impressed by a meeting in the Chamber of Commerce that I abandoned all idea of reaching Duluth or Fort William by steamer, as we had half planned to do. Such an easy and pleasing break in the transcontinental run is sure to be taken advantage of by a large proportion of future tourists. Time can be saved, and the expense is no more than that of running the car to Duluth.

Unfortunately the festivities had proved too much for the Skipper, and by the hour set for our departure she was far from well. Had I known how far we should not have set out. Although it was before six

o'clock in the morning the president of the Club was on hand to see us safely across the river, and we were met by the United States officials, who escorted us in two cars ten miles on our way into "Cloverland."

We had been warned a month or two ago that the south shore of Lake Superior (nearly 600 miles, we found the distance) was a country of wild forest and swamp with probably few roads. One authority had gone so far as to wager we could not find a road at all. We were prepared, therefore, for anything.

The leading-strings tourist is prone to suppose that a motor-route can be characterized in a word. To my knowledge, no road anywhere of 600 miles is all good or all bad. The arm-chair motorist fully believes that the Lincoln Highway, or any road he has seen depicted by the broad red streak across the map, is a great wide boulevard entirely uniform in character and running in a bee-line from start to finish. When he is told that the traveller on the high-sounding route must pick his way through a network of roads that look exactly like the red-streaked one—but often much better—and that the "Highway" is in some places a barnyard or a creek bed, he just says "Oh!" in thoughtful surprise. The fact is, that there is not yet in existence even the most pitiful attempt at a continuous good trans-America road.

The road in question, south of Lake Superior, though very poor for a hundred miles in all, constitutes probably the finest stretch of transcontinental going anywhere west of, say, Pittsburg.

That day when the Skipper was down and nearly out, the Michigan roads did their deadliest. From a magnificent stretch out from the American Soo, the going got worse and worse. The landscape was depressing, population thinned out until we crossed a sort of desert twenty miles across with only one house to be seen. There were not even any fences; the only construction of man being a sign, "Dixie Highway."

Every little while I was obliged to stop the car while the Skipper rested and tried to recover sufficiently to go on. She was now very ill. The road was fearfully rough and the poor riding qualities of our car made driving a torture. There was no place to stop; no towns and no farms so far as I can remember.

It was here that we definitely decided that I should continue the trip alone. It was a gloomy decision, but my partner tearfully admitted that she had been more or less on the edge of a breakdown almost since we left Ottawa. She had tried and tried to force herself to believe that the painful experiences would soon be past, but it was no longer any use. It only remained, then to find a convenient railway town, when she would leave me.

About four o'clock, at the end of seventy agonizing miles, we reached a wretched-looking village called Rexton. There was no hotel other than an impossible lumberman's boarding house, but, at the end of the line, in an orchard and half-hidden by cool, shimmering vines, there was a home so artistically built, so

spacious and alluring that it did not seem to belong at all.

"That's where you are going to stay and rest until to-morrow," I whispered to the Skipper. She scarcely had the energy to open her eyes, but she said,

"Oh, if I only could. I'm so tired."

My "story" went down with Mr. and Mrs. Miller at once, and in ten minutes the invalid was in bed surrounded by affectionate friends and luxuries so unexpected that it all seemed like Aladdin's palace in the desert. The whole round world seemed to change hue, and the man in the moon turned his mouth up instead of down. Alternately I wrote letters and chatted with the Millers, helped get the supper and wash the dishes. What is it that makes the newcomer feel so much more at home and less of a bother in a huge house?

The Skipper slept for sixteen hours and then was smiling and ready for the road once more. By some tacit understanding no reference was made just then to finding a railway station.

## CHAPTER X

### RUNNING IN BLOOD

During the next two days we covered 350 miles. This, in view of the fact that our car was of the 30-inch wheel variety, must certainly in itself spell a compliment to the roads of Northern Michigan.

The Monday was for us a series of Independence Day celebrations. At a town called Newberry we were sorely tempted to stop off. Newberry is one of those up-to-the-minute places that works hard and plays hard. Its superb roads, streamer-bedecked buildings and street-corners, brass bands and marshalled regiments of clean school children very nearly cost us the day. It is the type of community destined to cost many another traveller a day or more.

At Manistique the blue, sparkling waters of Lake Michigan came in sight to notch another milestone in our westward ho-ing.

Planning the "Grand Tour" by motor, one blithely fancies his car spinning gaily past a string of interesting towns, waterways and places of historic interest. This supposition is born of train travel in which the between-spaces are obliterated by high speed, sleep and story-books. The railway, it must be allowed, speeds over the drab and loiters or stops at the bright spots,

while necessity often compels the motorist to tarry amongst the drab while the opportunity afforded by good roads speeds him through the cities. The resultant impression on the unforewarned may become one of the enormous, tedious between-spaces and brief, tired glimpses of the interesting points. In his planning the embryo tourist flits unconcernedly over the Continent's surface, beholding geography with the eye of the bird. In the subsequent reality he crawls, grovels on his belly it sometimes seems, and loses, in the obtrusiveness of stumps, sand and bumps, that gently flowing contour he had in mind from the map. In his pre-dust age he preferred the absent-treatment system and was unconsciously performing his motor travel after the fashion of the would-be litterateur whose reading is limited to what is found on the morocco bindings. Nevertheless the wading patiently across each farm and township is reading one's country just as examination of each line brings knowledge of the book.

Nothing relieves the hours of the transcontinental tour like the appearance of a water horizon. Here at least you are looking at one of the big things of the business in hand and, metaphorically, you string another scalp on your belt. Lake Michigan rolled on our tongues as a friendly phrase.

West of Manistique large paving operations forced us for a few hours into many funny places indeed, and finally across a sandy plain on which we wound round and round for over twenty-five miles. There was no attempt at a proper road but wheel-paths ran

everywhere. Driving was not unlike driving a locomotive. There was no use for the steering-wheel as the car could not have run even one foot out of those deep sand pits. Fourth of July traffic was brisk and, as no two cars could pass one another, we were frequently amused by the spectacle of one car backing ahead of three or four advancing until a "switch" could be found. Sometimes two strings of cars would halt facing each other on a single track, the drivers grinning while they decided which section of the train would have to back up.

At the fine city of Escanaba our hotel was on a sort of pier jutting out into Lake Michigan, from which a light-house winked at us all evening. I think this winking may have had some reference to our repeated admiration of the beautiful weather, the silvery moon, etc. At any rate by next morning the heavens were opened and the floods released.

But it meant nothing to us; at least nothing more than merely rain. We were in the midst of Northern Michigan's wondrous roadworks. For 300 miles without a break the hard-surface stretches, sometimes through dense population, again scores of miles of peopleless forest. All day long in the pouring rain, but "lickity-split" we could go at any speed of which the car was capable.

Soon we were in the iron country, with lovely, rolling green hills and furry forests with lakes, like southern Quebec. We always remember the roads around the mining centre of Iron Mountain with a shuddering smile. Ordinarily the color of brick-dust,

the heavy rains had brought out the deeper red of their ore-impregnated surface so that the highways became a garish carmine. Distance only heightened the effect. Everywhere we turned, right, left, forward, like giant red tape-measures billowing over the graceful landscape, ran these rivers of blood. Immediately at our feet, shed by the smooth hard arch of the road, most suggestive little gutters trickling down added to the gurgling crimson flow on the roadside. We laughed, but nevertheless it filled us with ghastly, shivering re-incarnations of Red Terrors and Saint Bartholomew's eyes.

Our road clipped off a pretty corner of Wisconsin, then back into Michigan until, the following morning, we passed the roaring blast-furnaces of Ironwood and Bessemer, literally on a road of iron and, crossing the Sandy River, we passed into Wisconsin at Hurly.

Hurly, thirty years ago, was notorious as the most lawless spot in North America, though we found it to-day about as rowdy and boisterous as Zion City.

On its hundred and thirty miles of lakeshore, we saw enough of Wisconsin to recall it by its advertising slogan, "Beautiful Wisconsin." From a high level of land behind the city of Ashland we looked down and across a vast chequer-board of prosperous farms, painting upland and lowland alike in colors of prosperity, while the all pervading background was the sleepily sparkling expanse of Lake Superior.

To motor all day long, and all month through, amongst scenes fresh and unknown, when every turn ahead presents a new surprise, when every to-night is

a mystery and every to-morrow a world of adventure and uncertainty! . . .

But speaking of surprises; Ashland is presumably the capital of this thriving district of Wisconsin, and our lone, terrifying memory of Ashland is the uninterrupted clutch for life while bumping the bumps on its main street. I suppose every city of 12,000 people must cherish some ambition, and Ashland's evidently is to emulate the civic pride of such places as Jaffa, Lhasa and Upernavik.

Ten miles west we found the most picturesque little model of Sahara I can easily imagine, without having seen the Sahara. For twenty-five miles the state road here flows over sand hillocks on which the lone, drooping pines try most successfully to look like palms. Each time the sun broke through I half expected to disturb a fully caparisoned Arab on his prayer rug, and I'm sure dromedaries were hidden behind the pyramids, which must have been on the other road.

Ironwood and Iron Mountain, passed yesterday, had both been cities of real iron, but Iron River, at mile 1,164 from Montreal, proved to be only grocery stores. Not that the circumstances rendered it unimportant to us, for it was there that we purchased, at ten cents, cash with the order, an empty potato sack. A mile further along, we filled at a gravel dump and took it aboard in a vain effort to induce the back seat to stay within calling distance of the road. As I have proudly intimated, the transfer of the sack was settled in cash, but I have not to this day remitted the State

of Wisconsin for the gravel. Albeit I transported it twenty-five hundred miles without charge and it rests at this moment in my garage, and I hereby notify the legal proprietor that it is there available for his use.

Our last comprehensive view of Lake Superior was living geography. From our high position the north and south shores stood out plainly. It is seldom a traveller sees with his eyes just what he pictured from the map, but here, at the westernmost fingernail of the Great Lakes, you see the old school-room map from the hill-top and away off in the left hand corner, as though from the water-line, rise two spider webs of smoke, the twin cities of Superior and Duluth, the former flat as a table, the latter five miles long, half a mile wide and so high that you could take an aerial photograph of the harbor from the residence section.

NOTE.—The reader may observe that the story advances faster with the advent of good roads. He will be relieved to learn that the notoriously bad spots are mostly behind. It will be the part of wisdom in him to hope, with me, for better ones to come. Let us pray.

## CHAPTER XI

### FAMILY HISTORY

This is not our own family history, but that of the much more interesting families with whom we lodged.

The happiest habit we formed was that of forcing our presence for the night on unsuspecting peaceful families. At first the private home was a matter of necessity, but quickly it became purely a contrived accident, while the hotel was a sheer obligation and last resort. A solution for it all is camping, but, although the necessity for such an equipment was not overlooked by the Skipper and me, we rarely used it. The truth is that, on a strenuous trip, one does not do anything himself that he can pay anybody else to do.

At places where public officials were to be interviewed the hotel was our Hobson's choice, but many a time would we gladly have ensconced ourselves in the kitchen-garden of a country cottage when prudence and pre-arrangement compelled an advance into the city. If left to our own choice, however, we went into the business of reading character from the tilt of a roof, the cut of a hedge or a sitting-room curtain, and thus selected our temporary home. A home it invariably proved to be, although embarrassments almost identical had to be faced on each occasion.

First the self-introduction of ourselves and the subject. When I failed, the Skipper won. Then the proving that we really wished to be one of the circle and make no trouble. Lastly the rate of payment. Invariably it was stipulated at the outset that we would pay and almost invariably it transpired that, by morning, we were all such good friends that the mention of money was poo-hooed. This was in turn overcome only by the firm stand that, should we permit ourselves to be freed, we could never have the face to introduce ourselves to another kind family next evening.

Nothing but satisfaction and delightful recollections came of these visits, although our hosts were of diverse classes and characters.

Many an evening spent around the organ or on the front steps has revealed to us the history of a whole county, which otherwise would have been lost ground. Some families wanted to know all about us, but most of them, thank heaven, wanted to tell us about themselves.

I am thinking particularly of the Milbecks, who at once entranced and convulsed us. Mrs. Milbeck was Irish, and her husband a naturalized German. There were a great many children, and Mr. Milbeck was the sort of man whom I might have expected, in his guttural and pretended indifference, to shout out that he didn't know whether they were all in, but he shut the door when he thought there were enough in!

A good introduction to Mrs. Milbeck's character was the showing to us of a newspaper clipping pictur-

ing a month-old infant recently found deserted in an ash can.

"My, but I wanted the little darlin'," she cried, kissing the picture; "I couldn't sleep nights for thinking of him."

"What did they do with the baby?" asked the Skipper.

"Sure I don't know, but they wouldn't let me have him," and she unfolded a letter from the superintendent of the foundling home in the city.

"But haven't you got quite a few of your own?" I asked.

"A—bout a dozen," from the darkness of the next room, came in the trombone voice of the German, who had not up to this time thought well enough of us to appear.

Seeing that we enjoyed family affairs, little Robert, aged seven, contributed his share while the family dish-washing went forward.

"My granny and gran'pa had a golden wedding," he rolled out, after taking a commanding standing position before us.

"Oh! Did they? Just lately?"

"No," somewhat disappointed at the question, "quite a while ago, when I was a little kid."

"I see. They had been married fifty years, eh?"

"Well—pretty near it. (More disappointment at unintentional inquisitiveness.) "I think it was about forty nine; but, ye see, they were afeerd grand'pa wouldn' winter."

"Yes, and did he winter?"

"You bet! He up and wintered three times."

After Robert and his contemporaries had been tucked away we listened to what we have always since referred to as "The Great Dramar of the Gall-Stones." The family, it seemed, had lately achieved local fame. Mrs. Milbeck had been operated on for gall-stones. There had been fifty-two of them.

"No, Will, fifty-one," corrected the patient, in a tone that implied that the question had been debated before.

"Now, Em., I zay fifty-two. Dere was the one for Effie's folks and two losted."

"No, only one got lost. I was showing them that day to the Lukins, and the little lad—he pulled my arm."

"Then, Mrs. Lukin, she swiped one!" with a hostile, threatening glance. "I counted dem often enough; I got to know."

"We kept the bottle here for a couple o' weeks," Mrs. Milbeck apologized, "but it was so much trouble bringing the folks up from the store that we took it down there. But we'll both go down with you in the morning."

"Dozens of beebles comin' in every day to see them," added Will, proudly.

"Yes, and some of Walback's customer's, too," nodded Em., as though to her husband. This reference to the rival store brought a knowing smile from the head of the house, showing he had not been asleep to the fact.

When Mr. and Mrs. Milbeck retired, Clovis, the eldest daughter, still sat with us. Her former silence led us to believe that she felt herself overlooked, but did not intend to allow it to rest at that.

"There!" she exclaimed as though playing the high trump, while she slapped down before us a huge brown disk, "that is the only gen-u-wyne leather medal ever coined." It was six inches in diameter, bore the ink-drawn image of a large rat and was inscribed, "To Clovis Milbeck, from the Citizens," while just underneath the rat were the words, "For Conspicuous Courage."

"That looks interesting," offered the Skipper, smiling, but aching with curiosity nevertheless.

"It was at the Oddfellows Annual Benefit," she gasped, nervous at her swift success in rivetting our attention. "The hall was always 'fested wid rats. Just as Mayor Symons was introducing the visitin' speaker I felt the beast 'atween my feet. I shuffled 'em mighty quick, and with that the horny claws run up my leg. The more I shook my clothes the higher he crawled. 'Stead o' yellin' and throwing' the entire audience into a panic, I just grabbed Mr. Rat in my fist and you bet I hel' onto him and my skirt good and tight till the show was over. Fin'lly I could hardly unloose my hand, but that rat was sure dead." She paused for effect—and she got effect. "The Mayor publicly congratulated me, and the fellas at *The Enterprise* struck this medal."

We heartily added our congratulations to those of the Mayor. Clovis was somewhere about thirty, and a

frail young thing of some two hundred pounds. The deed of heroism leaves so much to be imagined that I feel it might spoil something to comment.

"They all remembered their parts," I observed, after we were in our own room.

"Yes," yawned the Skipper between laughs, but at the same time tapping her stomach significantly. "I'd rather one of them had remembered we had had no supper." In the recital that detail had been overlooked.

As there was no basin in our rooms we had to go down next morning to the kitchen sink to wash, along with the other dirty faces. I pumped while the Skipper washed, and tit-for-tat.

The fried eggs, pancakes and mince pie put us in good humor, but unfortunately at the same time re-sharpened our sense of it. The Skipper tried to dodge the gall-stones, but our hosts had no intention of denying us that honor. We were commanded to stop the car at the store. The Skipper hissed into my ear that, if I said anything to make her laugh, she would settle with me later.

The few spectators (doubtless Walback's customers) at the moment around the bottle were majestically swept aside, and we beheld! In a moment of ill-considered munificence Mr. Milbeck withdrew the cork. Then, seeing my eyes pop, in presumable admiration, Mrs. Milbeck asked if I would like to hold some of the gall-stones in my hand. I explained that, while I could not think of accepting for myself, I knew my wife would gratefully accept. As the abashed Skipper

saw the precious stones trickle into her hand I could see that she felt very keenly about it and made mental note to record the honor in due course to her relations and friends.

All would now have been well had not Mr. Milbeck been seized with the inspiration, now that the bottle was open, to count the stones and satisfy himself as to whether Mrs. Lukin had actually stolen one. If there were forty-nine he was probably right, and if there were fifty he would also be right.

There were forty-seven!

In a sort of crazy panic the suspicious Milbecks simultaneously peered into the Skipper's hand. Without realizing the proper length of a joke, I turned on her also and regarded her with a look of sedate reproof, while wagging my head sadly. She seemed confused, but, as it suited her complexion, I smiled. She did not smile back.

After each one of Walback's customers had got a hard look, everybody by unexpressed consent got down on hands and knees. Believing it to be an opportune time to leave town, the two of us slipped out. Once in the car I whispered mockingly, "Rather a low-down trick to steal the people's sto—"

"You keep quiet. I've had just enough from you!"

For some reason the Skipper and I had a bad day of it.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE FATHER OF RIVERS

Such cities as Ottawa, Sudbury and Sault Ste. Marie openly carry the air of business aristocracy to which their worldly possessions entitle them. Each is an autocrat in its line. Here again in Duluth there is apparent the mien of hauteur, a calm disregard if you insist on knowing, of even such cities as Montreal and New York. There is nothing the least offensive in it, but I never felt a city more supremely confident of its birthright.

While talking with an editor on the chief daily newspaper, a storm swept the city. We rarely hear thunder on the Pacific Coast, and this shooting-up of the town savored of the wild and woolly west.

The Skipper was waiting for a telegram. I had promised delay until it came. The chief minor note of our whole tour had been anxiety over our small daughter at home. Leaving her just recovering from an illness, she unfortunately became the victim of complications and all through our preliminary wanderings in Ohio, Pennsylvania and New York we were in telegraphic communication with Vancouver, the effect of which went far towards spoiling our pleasure. And even, now, at the end of each three or four days with-

out tidings, my wife's spirits drooped until revived by a telegram.

As we mounted the astonishing hills up from Duluth harbor, the cloudburst was renewed and the whole heavens went black as a coal mine. I was not a little worried over the immediate future. Instead of heading for Grand Forks, North Dakota, as planned, in search of better roads, I decided to steer a course north-west, in as straight a line as possible for the Manitoba line at Emerson. The State Department at Lansing had supplied me with the most detailed and accurate road information as to Michigan, but the Highway Commissioner of Minnesota, though courteous and thoughtful to a degree, expressed some doubt as to conditions on my present path. He gave me a blanket letter to all district road engineers making it their responsibility to see the pathfinding car through, but there are places that even a handy engineer cannot get you through. Nobody in Duluth ventured to guess what shape the roads would be in. We were following unprecedented rains and, about one hundred miles ahead, was a wide uninhabited area described "National Forest Reserve."

But nothing could depress the Skipper in face of her reassuring telegram. For her the road had no hazards, the rain was not wet and the evening was morning.

"How cool and clean everything looks in the rain," she volunteered.

"Yes," I could afford to be sarcastic, "and how cool and clean I'll look after I've shovelled this old bus

out of three or four hogwashes. We've had enough rain for the rest of our lives."

"Cheer up! Better here than on the prairie."

Could we only have known, then, that from this last peep at Lake Superior until we should be in the midst of the high Rockies not one drop of rain would fall!

The road was a veritable speedway for forty-two miles to Floodwood, where we remained that night with a hospitable Swedish family (it would have been more difficult to have chosen a non-Swedish family in that part of the world), setting out next morning for the mysterious interior of Minnesota.

An hour along the way we came upon a bridge spanning a lovely, lazy stream some hundred feet wide. One bank was steep and wooded, the other hay-covered and falling gently to the water.

"What river is this?" I asked a man on a wagon, "I suppose it's not—"

"Yes," he interrupted, and at once a sort of exultant feeling came into my throat, "she's the Mississippi all right."

Shades of Marquette and La Salle, of the '49-ers and the Mormons! This, then, was the target, the zero-point from which the lodestar wanderings of the prehistoric American were measured. For a moment I found it hard to believe; then, in an impulse of uncontrollable heart expanding, I leaped from the road and ran down through the hay. Dipping my hands in the placid waters I held them aloft, rubbed the drops

across my forehead and held my arms out over the stream.

An odd proceeding, to be sure, but nevertheless as undesigned as it was capricious. As I had stood there a moment I realized that I had in reality been worshipping the Father of Rivers, and it struck me forcibly that only a small blow was necessary to break through the veneer of a thousand years.

The Skipper also had caught a spark of my flash of emotion.

"You might at least have brought me up one or two of those little stones," she remarked, sympathetically if reprovingly. I was a bit ashamed of not doing so, and even a trifle ashamed of my idol-worship, but the one definite thing about a man's shame is that he is ashamed of it and tries to get away from it.

"I might have," I admitted deceitfully, "but then you know those stones wouldn't go very well, anyway, with the gall-stones."

However, this morning the Skipper's disposition was cooled ten times more that it is wont to be cooled. Unfolding her telegram, she concluded archly, "Go ahead! Make all the fun you want of your poor old wife."

## CHAPTER XIII

### THROUGH THE CORE OF THE APPLE

When, a little later, we found our path re-crossing the Mississippi, the incantations were omitted. Even heathen religious impulses were in abeyance, for, just about that time, we negotiated a forest road so extra-special in the way of a ploughed field that a ploughed field would have hidden its head. When I say it was dry at the time, and broad, I have catalogued its virtues. An hour's rain would have affected a motor passage of it just like the breaking-up of the ice would affect the trotting time on a river track. Going in, I chose my rut very carefully, because that rut would be mine till the end of the chapter. To be exact we selected a set of three ruts, two of wheel and one of differential, so each driver had to locate his own make of automobile or carve out a fresh formation for fifteen miles. Each time we stalled in these endless graves and commenced the collecting of geologic specimens I noticed a couple of Minnesota eagle-owls, or at least some queer variety of hungry looking, odd-shaped eagles. It occurred to me that the creatures were moving as often as we moved and when we stopped, made slow, wide circles above us.

"What in the name of heaven are those birds?" I snapped irritably, while adjusting a specially sweat-producing boulder under the wheel.

"Vultures, probably," with sweet indifference and a non-committal smile from the Skipper, who did not take her eyes from the open page. I thanked her for the cheerful suggestion and promised not to disturb her again.

Our third crossing of the great River was at a village called Federal Dam. By this time it was four hundred feet across, although we were getting further up stream all the while, and we crossed on an eight-foot roadway on the dam itself. I wished we could have remained there for the pike fishing in the evening. Even at noon the huge fellows darted everywhere, just below the dam.

From here we entered the Forest Reserve. At only one place in the whole area did we find houses, and forty miles is a long, long way through the forest. It was roots and rocks mostly, after the mud-holes, with some sand-pits to round out the list, but at other times we ran twenty-five miles an hour over the grass. The hours were shortened and enlivened for us by the presence of "The Kill-joys" as we called them. In detail, these were the Fat Man and the extra Fat Man, a pair of sad, greasy, collarless individuals in a brass-nosed Ford piled to the roof with pots and staring bed-clothes. I say "in a Ford," but not exactly. Generally one of them was helping to push it up hill and even on the level one or other usually ran behind, for the purpose, we concluded, of keeping himself hot and

depressed and to fight off any summer fever of cheerfulness.

They had never been over the road nor spoken to anybody who knew it. They had no idea how far it was through, but the one thing they were positive about was that, "It's a who—le lot worse ahead."

"But why shouldn't it get better?" said the Skipper.

"I don' know," wearily, "but this kind of road allus gets worse as ye go on," drawled the Extra Fat.

"Oh, but we'll all get there somehow."

"I don' know. I guess lots of them has to turn back."

Your car's all right, isn't it?"

"It probably ain't. I'm none too sure o' them valves."

They were wiping their faces with towels, and diving away down their backs as well. Incidentally they were barring the road. We glanced at each other for optimistic inspiration when the Extra Fat broke out in another wail.

"Turr'ble place this to get stopped all night. I knew a fella got pneumonia—."

"Oh, for the love o'Mike, move one side and let us pass," I laughed. "You'll give us the blues."

"All right. Good-bye! I don't think we'll ever start out like this again."

We saw them later, in Cass Lake, and I smilingly reminded them that the road had got better towards the end.

"Yes, but"—and the Fat and the Extra Fat's mouths drew down like long O's—"did yez hear about all the sand ahead? Turr'ble turr'ble!"

"Say, what are you fellows doing? Moving to another part of the State?"

"No, no! Just a pleasure tower."

To do these "gents" justice, the sand ahead was what they said it was. I wished more than once that evening that I had accepted the invitation of the State Chamber of Commerce Secretaries. This lively crowd was in convention at Cass Lake, and they had received us with true United States enthusiasm and asked us to be their guests for two days. We remembered the delays of the Upper Ottawa trail and sorrowfully declined.

The great secret of Minnesota's road scheme gradually dawned upon us. Practically every city is tacked on its extreme edges, therefore Mr. State Roadbuilder, like the boy with the apple, has taken bites all round and offered to hand the core to somebody else. The largest town in this core is Bimiji, watering-place, convention centre and round up of fashion, where the Roosevelt Highway and the Jefferson Highway meet and where scores and scores of touring automobiles congregate nightly. The roads in all directions from Bimiji remind one of the prospect from the bars of the old cow pasture. All paths converge there, but woe betide him who tries to investigate their origin. The Jefferson Highway, which we followed on from here, starts out by cross-cutting into a briar patch through a hole about seventy-five inches wide, then it balks a few times if a small jack-pine bars the way, runs down alongside the railway track and out

again through a break in the barbwire fence. Up on the flat, it divides itself into a series of lanes darting amongst the raspberry bushes, as though overcome by a sense of freedom at having so many perfectly good square feet to call its own.

It was in Bimiji that I had a chance to study the Minnesota system of common-school education. I had promised to wire Montreal and Vancouver when we crossed the Mississippi, so I handed the messages to the representative of the Western Union. He made me print out the names of Montreal and Vancouver again and promised to get to work on it. The office was in the hotel and he sent for me in half an hour to report that he could work faster if I could tell him which state Montreal was in. I said it was in a place called Canada, and he looked offended that I should see fit to trifle with him. After an hour he looked up and very good-naturedly informed me that I was wrong about Montreal. Nevertheless he had succeeded in ferreting out the information himself. It was in Quebec. He believed he could get the rate, too. About midnight he told me that his Company would send the message for one dollar, which was the amount I had laid in his hand to begin with.

He is still trying to find out where Vancouver is. Meantime I drove two hundred and seventy-one miles to Winnipeg and wired Vancouver from there that we had crossed the Mississippi. This was quite necessary, because otherwise the people would have concluded we had tunnelled under it or gone around it.

There were one hundred and sixty miles of bad roads in the centre of Minnesota, so, at an average of three swear words to the mile— But, however, as the Skipper remarked later, "You got your mouth soaped out by the good roads we had on the west side." As I have told, all is smooth and rosy on the outer rim of the State.

When once the car reached the wheat belt we were on good roads just as quickly and suddenly as jumping off the sidewalk, though, strictly, it is a case of jumping on the sidewalk.

During those bumpy weeks the most lively and significant phrase we discovered was "Back to earth." The car might be gliding motionlessly Pacificwards on concrete, pillowing smoothly over tarvia, or moving with that tremor peculiar to worn macadam, when, "Slap, crash, rattle, bang!" we would have reached the end of it.

"Back to earth!" we would stutter in chorus, while I tried to check the speed.

The Minnesota roads in the north, through Red Lake Falls and Thief River Falls, are something more than good. They are creations, inventions. I have never seen anything like them. Some of these roads through the wheat country are forty feet wide, crowned smooth and hard as a brick wall. At intersections the surface is cunningly banked as in a speedway. Sometimes the turn is made by a long graceful arc a hundred yards long, contrived by taking in a corner of the field. You can "make" these right-angled turns without slowing down. The roads are raised high

above the surrounding prairie by digging enormous, deep ditches. We know all about that, because, on a crowded spot, we had the instantaneous choice of fouling a fine span of horses at high speed or turning into this ditch. In we went, not upside down but head first. We navigated that bottomless pit for quite a distance till we found a spot where the climbing was good. Nobody hurt, but our reputation was dragged in the ditch, so to speak.

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE OPENING PRAIRIE'S SPELL

There was another incentive for the speed to which we had been increasing that afternoon.

"The King's International Highway" divides itself naturally into four divisions: "the East," 600 miles; the Lakes, 900 miles; the Prairie, 1,000 miles, and the Mountains, 800 miles. At Thief River Falls the speedometer read 1,488. Thoughtfully of the belief that the diversified scenery was all behind us, we were in a state of keen, childish excitement to be abroad on the glorious expanse of that gigantic carpet called "The Prairie."

Like others who have crossed and re-crossed that great plateau in pullman cars, we had perceived it not. But, unlike many others, we knew that we knew it not. Since leaving Montreal we had unriddled the spirit of silent forests, the spirit of a beautiful river, the spirit of the Great Lakes. With this preparation we were impelled to grasp and grapple with the real spirit of this new region we were embarking upon, this broad smooth back of a continent, whereon men station themselves at unfeeling distances from their fellows and, in loneliness and moiling, endure the parching heat of summer and the relentless, stinging cold of winter.

How often, toying with a silver spoon on the spot-

less napery of a luxurious diner, had we looked out commiseratingly on the squat weather-greyed villages, over the waste of brown, dry hills or momentarily at a child playing by a dolesome, windswept homestead—and shuddered. “Ugh! What an existence; to think of wearing your life out that way!” A man driving jaded horses harnessed to a slowly jolting waggon on a bad road that stretched to barren eternity, with not even a shack on the horizon. Whither went he, and wherefore? The women? That far-off tiny light, twinkling in an ocean of gathering night—there she is, from four in the morning till dark, at her waiting, and her tasks, tasks, tasks. This limitless space in which to move, but still barred in a twelve-foot cabin, like a penned-in animal. “It’s all the same, all awful—except that winter is worse.”

It was thus that we had been content to judge the prairie. And yet what would we have said of the man who published his description of a country from having navigated its shore-line?

We were destined to see the prairie in many lights and many moods, but our first hours were naturally richest in impressions. Turning a corner seems an exaggerated and over-dramatic introduction to a vast inland country; nevertheless the minute we turned north-west on the Pembina Trail our spirits swelled to the bursting point and our arms were flung out in adoration of the promised land.

Curving in huge graceful arcs, as far as vision might go, this historic natural roadway was old in the days when all of the northland from the Mississippi

country was called Quebec. Along the Pembina Trail aboriginal red men trekked from the Red River country to the Fathers of Rivers, and from it were born the twins, St. Paul and Minneapolis. To-day the Trail consists of a narrow single-track sliced into the nodding wheat, elevated on a gently-rising ridge which causes one to marvel as to its geologic or glacial origin. Unlike the wheat country in general, the waving grain may here be plucked from the car seat, as it rustles on the mudguards like the swish of water as the car speeds along.

Speeds indeed! How we did drive, on those narrow, rail-like ever converging streaks in the grass, as our delighted gaze reposed on that softly swelling sea of yellowing green.\* The picture was just nothing whatever but the wheat and the afternoon sun, and yet no artist had ever successfully portrayed the reality of it.

We speeded for the same reason that a skater, released from a poky rink, speeds over the frozen surface of a lake. It was the outward expression of a new-found sixth sense—the sense of freedom—the consciousness of being suddenly elevated to the level of men having the responsibility of vast distances to conquer.

The air. Heavens! What breaths of it we drew. (I thing that part of the prairie must be strewn with burst buttons).

“Have —I—” said the Skipper between sniffs, “have I ever really been here before?”

\*The soft wheat of northern Minnesota ripens very early.

"Yes," I said, "you have, in a smelly steel box, hurled along in the smoky, cinder-laden tail of a comet."

"And to think," she said, "boasting of knowing it, because you've crossed in a train."

After a while we came to a house—a real home—laughing children, garden, trees, barns, whitewashed fences. The farmer, standing there a minute and casting over those broad fields the eye of the master: what a realization must have been his, what a sense of kingship, what a place in the sun!

"Who lives in that house yonder?" I asked, pointing to the style of shack I had always associated with the prairie.

"Aw! I just keeps some implements there. My father run it up for a temporary shelter when we first settled here. He has a fine home in Thief River now. I got a son runnin' a bank there, too."

This, then, was what it meant to, "live and die in those miserable shanties," as we had so commiseratingly decided in our far-seeing wisdom and introspection.

"Has your father any other children?" I asked, in my impudent search for truth.

"Yes, I got a brother in the legislature; and my youngest brother—he owns the River Grand Lumber Company, but his wife's fond of travelling and he spends most of the time away." While I was thinking, thinking hard, he added, "But I took the farm: suits me all right."

"I should say it would suit anybody," I echoed as

we drove along. "What a lot there is for these people to get out of life."

"It seems to me," replied the Skipper reflectively, "that it is we, rushing by in railway trains, who are doing the standing still, while the farmer and his family are making off with the bacon."

"Yes, and 'the bacon' means a pretty good deal," I sympathized with myself.

As the sun neared the horizon of our new-found world we opened the daily guessing-match as to our manner of spending the night. We had been on the Jefferson Highway all day, and this particular stretch of it ran for over forty miles without even the trace of a village. The scattered settlers seemed to be all Norwegians, and we approached the home of a Mr. Hjolle to negotiate for lodgings or get permission to camp.

In a few minutes we had become part of one of those family circles which were perhaps the most delightful feature of our entire tour. The household of the widowed father and his four strapping, smiling sons was presided over by the only daughter. To make life livable this family had a pretty home in a pretty setting of trees, water supply on tap, telephone, an organ, a gramophone, many books and pictures, two automobiles and all the wealth of a thoroughly modern farm with an enormous herd of sheep down by the brook. The eldest son and his sister I recall particularly as most charming people.

They were workers all, but any one of them could have realized on his share of the heritage, amassed

since leaving the fatherland, and become a man of consequence in town. As I watched the quiet poise of these men, perceived their entire confidence in the future and beheld about me the fine work of their hands I thoughtfully thanked God for what I was learning.

When darkness eventually came, the Skipper and I went for a short walk along the road—just the same remembered straight, plain road—and, as we talked, we read into the fabric of this despised prairie a new philosophy. Our ears were not filled with the rattle and rush of a hissing locomotive, and what we saw was no longer a dull waste space to be killed, but rather a wide empire of wealth to be harnessed and driven, by the fearless and the strong, for the world's good. The reason that I and my ilk had never known of, or entered, the struggle was probably because it is no place for weakling, stay-at-home luxury-lovers. The Prairie—but how boldly, characteristically it speaks for itself:

"I have place for men—

Young men with blood and muscles taut and backs of  
steel

To tame my winds of winter bleak,

To bear my summer's heat.

My breast is rich for them.

But let them be cruel,

Eager like wolves for gain.

I have no valleys for the old;

No sacred woods for ancient gods,

Only the dry windswept waste

That must be quelled."

As we heard, that night, in the room below, family prayers in the Norwegian tongue, we were glad that we had lived that day.

## CHAPTER XV

### IN THE GRIP OF THE LAW

The speed mania is a disease that grows on one like the spending habit. Neither requires any character to acquire, but considerable to break. It is all very well to determine that you will drive down town slowly this morning; but to determine to drive across the Continent slowly, unless the Lord created you a very cautious man or a saint, is only the foundation for a loss of self respect. When you have three or four thousand miles to wend there is no such thing as doing it leisurely. It would be about the same thing as running your business leisurely or going through life leisurely; and it takes originality to be that sort of a man.

Counting our travelling days from the night at Rexton when the Skipper was *hors de combat*, we averaged one hundred and thirty-nine miles a day.

There were three separate inspirations for moving rapidly that beautiful Sabbath morning after we left our hospitable Norwegian family. The roads were good, we were getting back to our own country, and I had just been definitely assured that my partner of the evil days was to stick to me right through.

This purely personal upshot may incidentally be of great interest to prospective lady tourists. After a round of more or less trying entertainment in Montreal, we set out with the Skipper only fairly equipped physically. She then became run down by the real sufferings of the first week, and less than held her own for a few days longer. The crisis arrived and she gave up. This was the midnight of our whole adventure, but we did not know that, on the ruins of the depleted tissues, a new strength, the strength of necessity, had been building up. Her spunk in sticking to it that last day in Michigan, after our united decision to have her abandon the attempt, proved her deliverance, for suddenly the new strength came to maturity like inexhaustible reinforcements, and from that day until the end there was never any talk of letting go. All at once she got used to the life; that is all.

When we reached home the Skipper was stronger in feeling and appearance than at probably any other time in her life. The driver, on the contrary, was reduced in weight and drawn in appearance, if still in the very best of health and spirits. The reason for this was that, while her worries were the obvious ones and superficial, mine were of the sudden and unseen. The passenger worries as to passing a vehicle on a narrow road or at the prospect of a hazard to be met with to-morrow, while the driver worries about the risks he does not know of and cannot see. I know a motorist who averages twenty-five miles an hour over a certain

hill route he has driven dozens of times. He knows exactly the places where it is necessary to slow down, the spots where he must watch sharply for traffic, the nasty bridges and the bad holes. If that driver tried to average twenty-five miles over another, similar road that he had never seen, he might very soon break his neck.

This is the feature of new-country touring that should be borne in mind. Driving at practically full speed into the smooth, the rough and the hazard alike, the transcontinental driver must be ready, always, at an instant's notice, to slow down; must be watching keenly every second and be prepared for an emergency at every turn. Cliff roads and huge hills are no more risky, in these circumstances, than slippery corners, slipping brakes or concealed railway crossings.

Passing from northern Minnesota into southern Manitoba we found to be somewhat like walking from Norway into France. The country here was of course, as flat as a pancake and, in its evident prosperity, like the pancake, flowing with butter and honey. The railway, the road, the Red River and the international boundary converge at Emerson, and our admiration for American institutions did not render any less joyous to our eyes those gently floating folds of the Union Jack. Also, our personal vanity being anything but dead, it was a fillip to our national feeling that we were expected and recognized by the Government officials.

Passing the customs was very much more of a social than a personal event, and even the immigration in-

spector was constrained to view with smiling indulgence a disreputable exterior which he might with justice have classed as "undesirable."

For seventy miles into Winnipeg we followed the pretty, willow-banked Red River. In fact the River followed us, for on that perfect clay road (perfect in dry weather) we could pursue the even tenor of our way at forty miles per hour, had our car been built on the 40 m.p.h. lines. I record, now, that it was not so built, by way of anticipating one who averred that it was.

I recall precisely how it happened.

We had passed through some villages where the population was Frenchier than it was in Quebec. We had had no idea that there were so many automobiles and "rigs" in Manitoba as had assembled for the Sunday afternoon baseball matches and religious processions. The priests were leaders in both departments, the young men and the maidens were resplendent in the New York fashions of the winter before last, while their elders staringly speculated on the significance of the pairing-off, or talked pig. Possibly the one led to the other.

Like an unsatisfied swain myself, I asked the Skipper again to reassure me that I was not to be deserted, and she said demurely, "Of course not! I suppose husbands are all the same; the older they get the more looking after they need."

"Do you see that big building there?" I then asked, sweeping my little finger across the sky-line of a quarter of a million people.

"I see all the big buildings of Winnipeg."

"That tall one on the right. That's the hotel where we're going to live like lords for a day or two," I said rewardingly.

"I don't mind how soon," she added; "we've had nothing since eight this morning, you know."

"At this suggestion perhaps I did come a little nearer the 40 m.p.h. An annoying car, paddling in front, we honked out of our way. The cocky little driver, who seemed as though he might be a fireman out for his half-holiday, looked daggers at us, and his wife nudged him in French, not to submit. So it fell out that we both set spurs and had a bit of a scamper. Our car was on the wrong side of the road, so I called to the Skipper to have an eye open for a possible policeman while I put this fellow and his rattletrap of a car in their places.

It was an easy victory, and we resumed our pleasant conversation about roast duck on the half shell.

After a mile or so, however, the vanquished one came swerving, steaming, clattering alongside and at once a male and female magpie turned sweet peace into a hobgoblin of war.

"Stop that car!" "Stop that car!" "Stop that car!"

The cocky one then pranced in front of our radiator, took a heavy note-book from his pocket and commenced to write feverishly. The blood came to his cheek and bad blood into his eye as he paused long enough to push back his fireman's cap and wipe off the sweat of

the chase, while *sa femme* (I instinctively drop into the French language which I learned one evening in a railway station) sat tightly at the wheel, with steam up, trying to look like a gorgon and wearing a sort of shot-while-attempting-to-escape expression.

"Gimm—me—your—name," demanded the supposed fireman.

Inadvertently I gave him the correct one.

"You drive forty miles per hour tr'oo dis municipality?"

"No."

"All right," deadly shake of the head, "We see about that."

"How you going to see about it when I can't do it?"

"No cheek, please!"

By this time he had recorded sufficient of the gruesome details to get me the rope, but I could see he was still wrestling with our British Columbia license plate, which is a poor spidery sort of monogram.

"You Americans can' drive up here and do anything you like," he pronounced at last, slamming his notebook.

"No, I suppose not."

"You got your license there?" I handed it to him.

"How long you goin' stay in Fort Garry?"

"About three minutes."

The unkindness of fate in cutting short our stay in his midst seemed to touch him. "Well, I fine you \$10," he said not unkindly, at the same time magnanimously tearing off a receipt form while he resumed his trusty pencil.

"Well now," I said, in a firing up of the wicked old days when I used to shy ripe tomatoes at men on butcher-carts, "you've asked me quite a lot about myself. What about you? Who are you?"

"Me?" insulted and astonished. "I'm the town constable of this Municipality of Fort Garry."

I had almost commenced to suspect it, but I had forgotten to get Satan behind me—unless in an auxiliary sense. A fiendish desire to play with fire seized me. What was this "Municipality of Fort Garry" anyhow that it expected us, world-famous pathfinders, to be answerable to its puny laws!

"A cop, eh? That's what you tell me. How do I know it's so?"

The grins of a few spectators were not proving exactly oil on the boiling waters.

"You don't believe me!" fire in his eye, tearing back his coat to the badge and tapping it. I feigned not to observe this; so he unpinned the thing with trembling fingers and poked it in my face.

"Huh!" grunted the devil within me. "Where I live all the boys send fifteen cents to a mail-order house and get these things. Let's have a look at your commission, your charter—your *brevet*." The last word is another extract from his language; I used it as an international concession and possibly to flatter his vanity. But his visage was blowing red, white and purple; he was past flattery.

"You—you say, right now, if you pay de fine or not?" Ultimatum.

"That's a silly question," I rapped at him. "You know I've never given you the slightest encouragement to suppose I had the remotest intention of paying anything." He was discouraged, but not finished by any means.

"You want to go to gaol?"

The gorgon hissed imperatively and the cocky one answered the call of his mate by sidling over to her, but without taking his fiery eye from me. If I had a hiss from a wife like that I would go wall-eyed and hold my wrist to be stung. Some parts of the French language I do not recognize unless spoken distinctly, but probably the whisper was to the effect that the goal was being used for a crap-party by the mayor.

"Come now, you with the badge," I coaxed; "who's going to put me in goal? You?"

"I have de o—thority to fine you." He was treading gingerly, for fear of getting out of his depth.

"Yes, I guess that's right."

"And I can arrest you."

"Huh, huh! But who can put me in gaol?"

"De magistrate."

"Why didn't you say that before you threatened me? Where's the magistrate?"

"I take you dere all right. Don't forget dat," threateningly, as he shoved the gorgon out of the warm seat. "Just keep up to me."

Drawn on by the compelling eyes of the gorgon turned on us at every moment of the journey, we reached the magistrate's stronghold, and prepared to pick out our correct size in irons. The magistrate

heard the complaint in two languages not counting falsetto and lyric-soprano. Just to be nasty, I pretended I did not understand French and held out for my right to have it all repeated in English. It seemed that I was up on five counts, the most serious being that I had publicly questioned the cocky one's being a policeman.

"I'll make the fine \$5," quietly and after the magistrate had put the X-rays on my pockets. But I had handed every last cent over to the Skipper before coming in, for fear temptation and hunger should get the better of me.

"And what happens if I refuse to pay, your honor?"

"I have power to impound the car." He spoke with dignity.

"I will agree to that, sir," glancing through the window. "You won't take my wife as well, I suppose?"

"And, for that matter, I have power to commit you."

"Very well, sir, I cannot object."

There was, he suspected, some palmed card up my sleeve. He had drawn out a committal form, but he did not write it.

"What do you expect will happen, Mr.—er—Gomery, if you are—locked up?"

"Oh, nothing particular, your honor, except that every newspaper from Halifax to Vancouver will announce to-morrow morning that I have been put in gaol for driving this car from Montreal. And about half a million motorists will have a long laugh at you and me and the Municipality of Fort Garry."

"Would you welcome such publicity?" he asked sharply.

"Probably not! But at present I'm working for a new Canadian highway which can stand all the publicity it gets."

"You think that Fort Garry would be laughed at?" His face tried to be serious, but it was very human at last.

"Why, your honor, you're laughing yourself, now. How can you expect the world to do otherwise?"

I had the magistrate roped and bound, but that constable had no sense of humor. He commenced to demand that Justice take her course; so I had to cross-check him.

"The constable here is perfectly right, your honor." I decided that discretion was a rarer jewel than impudence. "He's done his duty and done it well. No motorist will ever bargain with him." A grinning, determined shake of the cocky one's head confirmed the flattery. "He's got a splendid car and he knows how to use it."

The constable here proved the impossible by smiling blandly; we shook hands all round and I rejoined the Skipper.

"Well, what happened?" she asked.

"They beat my pride, but I beat their pocketbook," I claimed.

A few blocks from our hotel we heard the sudden whirr of a motor cycle and caught the glint of a uniform alongside.

"O Lord!" I groaned. "Again?"

"Good afternoon, sir!" said the trim officer. "This is the pathfinding car from Montreal is it not? I hope you've had a good trip, lady. We keep to the right in Winnipeg; city speed limit fifteen miles. Nothing I could do for you? Good afternoon, sir!"

"That's policing!" I said as we drove on.

"Yes, policing methods are generally recognized by gaol-birds," sighed she of the appetite.

## CHAPTER XVI

### DUE WEST IN THE SUNLIGHT

The usual "interview" appearing in the Winnipeg morning press left apparently little to be told. But an evening journal, taking, we understand, a humorous view of our visit, emphasized under red headlines our race with the suburban constable. The reporter wrote that the record of bringing the first automobile to make the run direct from Montreal was, after all, something that could be done by anybody who took the trouble. But the record of coming scatheless through the Fort Garry police court, Ah! That was something, and it was rather humiliating to several hundred unfortunate local motorists that this laurel should go to an outsider.

I had some valuable advice and information from the officials of the Manitoba Motor League who also offered entertainment. But the sort of entertainment we wanted was just lazy freedom—particularly freedom from entertainment.

The Canadian Prairie never had two more interested visitors than were we, speeding west from Winnipeg. Yes, speeding in spite of our lesson; I said it took character to break the habit. Getting a start some time after midday, we had evening dinner in Brandon, 145 miles away. For sixty miles to

Portage la Prairie, a perfectly prepared (dry weather) surface, we travelled "like a blue streak." I never saw a blue streak, nor heard of one travelling; nevertheless it is the thing to travel that way in this part of the country—so we did it.

I wonder if the average man under like circumstances was as ignorant as I was of the great central part of our country. "A flat treeless area between the Great Lakes and the Rocky Mountains," as we read in the old school books, was indeed a wretched libel. We found a flat area surrounding Winnipeg, with many trees, and made attractive by two fine rivers, and another flat, treeless plain west of Regina; otherwise hundreds of miles of rolling country, steep hills, many well-watered valleys and in fact about everything we had not suspected from car-windows. For almost two hundred miles west of Winnipeg the Assinaboine River is alongside, culminating near Virden in a scene of panoramic beauty which made up probably the prettiest single view in the entire journey from Montreal.

Here, in the east of the Province, we have "The Old Country" of the Prairie. The farmhouses are generally things of beauty, surrounded by lawns, trees and shrubbery. I wonder they do not alter the old-fashioned name of Portage la Prairie. It is no longer a "portage" any more than Regina is the "Pile of Bones" it was forty years ago.

Some miles west of pleasant, homey Carberry we bobbed up surprisingly on to an untilled, unfenced, uninhabited, roadless common. We did not know how

wide—maybe ten miles on the map, but forty at least when you have been frisking about on it endlessly with no guide whatever except the sun, and even the sun has the habit of sinking towards the south or east every few minutes. There were trails that carried one at any desired speed. Trails, trails everywhere, but not a man to ask! We knew that this plain had edges, but to reach one of them, any one, we could not. We wept with laughter at being lost in such a place, but lost we assuredly were. "Losht in the midst of an impenetrable forest!" said the Skipper, referring to the double-visioned gentleman who had bumped the same telephone pole three times.

Out with the compass and the map! Now then—west by north-west for Brandon; let 'er go! Put not your trust in trails; two points south of the sun, blow out the spinnaker and spank the spanker. (This nautical term goes surprisingly well on the prairie.) Five minutes thus running before the wind and we reached a road. "How do we get to Brandon?" we shouted at a moving load of hay and the dumb creature, being given the power of speech, made answer, "Drive in, I guess, if ye keep goin' ahead."

There is something gripping in the name Brandon; a name people will think of after they have forgotten where they heard it. Not that Brandon lacks merit in actuality, for its commanding position, its street car system, its splendid institutions and its famous fair go far to impress the visitor and there is that about it that speaks, "Come back."

Brandon was the only town of importance on our whole run from which we had no official welcome or notice. I went so far as to notify the automobile club officials whose names had been given me in Winnipeg, but perhaps they thought I wanted them to do something. I did. Something for themselves. As usual my friend who distributes motor fuel was the very spirit of welcome and helpfulness, but I had come to blush under the embarrassing recurrent kindnesses of this friend, so called on him only as we were driving away.

We now left the flat country behind awhile, and for forty miles drove over wavy lands, a range of hills on the left and to the right the Assinaboine growing more picturesque all the time. Here too was found the only long stretch of all-weather gravel road we encountered on the Prairie. Right through Virden and Elkhorn it goes, a credit to Manitoba.

A few miles beyond the latter town we crossed the Saskatchewan border and—

But I am determined to confine this chapter to pleasant roads.

## CHAPTER XVII

### SASKATCHEWAN

"The manners, methods and the modes  
Of building Caesar's Roman roads  
Are hidden by their early date;  
And archæologists' debate  
In terms unmeaning to the mob,  
Just how old Cæsar 'done the job'."

In Regina *The Morning Leader* asked me for a special article respecting Saskatchewan roads. After crossing the Province I prepared it, truthfully but severely, and dared them to print the thing. *The Leader* and the Saskatoon *Phoenix* used it at once and apparently the other papers copied. The Saskatchewan press has no silly ideas, but the Saskatchewan Government outlawed me. The Minister of Highways attacked me from the public platform. But *The Leader*, replying editorially, said that: "The criticisms of the pathfinder were as truthful as they were candid," and every Saskatchewan man I have since spoken to agrees that a fair line of speculative strategy for getting a good road is roundly to damn the bad one.

Saskatchewan is treeless. It also has the misfortune to be in the middle of the prairie country. The novelty of the "boundless" has worn off and it is too early yet to anticipate that greatest glory of a

transcontinental tour. Still this wonderfully rich and growing Province, with its waving beauty of wheat, its briar roses and the silent fascination of range lands, would be pleasant driving to the Red Route motorist, were it not for the neglected state of seventy-five per cent. of its roads, resulting in broken springs and over-worked patience.

This Province, where the roads were so cruel and the people so kind, always reminds me of an embarrassing compliment paid me by one of its prominent citizens. I have said that evidences of public spirit we always noted keenly.

We drew into a large town, just two-thirds across Saskatchewan, we will say, and stopped. Before we could get out of the car two men stepped from the sidewalk.

"You are Mr. Gomery of the Vancouver Automobile Club," said the first. "I am the president of the local Rotary Club and this is Mr. So—and—So, secretary of the Board of Trade. We know, of course, just what you are doing and if you can tell us how long you will be here we'll try and arrange something."

We were extremely tired and dirty after another "night out," and I said we would be stopping only long enough for a bath and a rest. An hour later the hotel clerk rang my room to say that the president of the Board of Trade and another official were waiting to see me. Both were bright capable-looking business men and I enjoyed them exceedingly. Again, as a Canadian motorist, I deplored the fact that of the thousands and thousands of transcontinental

tourists, all were using advertised United States highways for the simple reason that we in the north, with the only cool, well-watered paths available, had failed to lay out and boost a highway of our own. This and the fact that there was no continuous road across the British Columbia mountains.

The visitors rose to go. The president shook hands and said, "I've got to tell you that I'm very much disappointed in you." There was a twinkle in his eye. "We've all read about this tour, but I had thought that you were just a notoriety-hunter."

But in the very moment that this honest man was exonerating me, I discovered that his suspicions were correct. There seemed actually no way to do the thing the Club sent me out to do without notoriety.

I think that any publicity tending to discredit the undertaking was started by attempts of local agents of the car we drove to make it appear that the path-finding aim had something to do with this automobile. As a matter of fact the makers of the car acknowledged it in no way whatever, except possibly to make advertising capital, the factory denying even my modest request to make some slight alterations. Being perfectly free, therefore, to approve or condemn the car, I frankly admit that I could not be induced to pay as much as half price for another of the same make. It was only after our return we realized that the sufferings we endured from the abominable riding qualities could not be expressed in dollars.

An official high in the motor-touring world in Detroit asked me what car I had chosen, and then

said he was indeed very sorry for me. "What is a poor man to do?" I asked. "Why, take a Ford, of course. It will be a great deal better car for you than the one you've got."

Through Moosomin we loped along, over roads which, at their best, gave us something the motion of a prairie wolf, to Wapella, a typical elevator village. Starting next morning early we did a twenty-mile succession of mud-holes, which forcefully suggested to our minds a string of beads, in more senses than one. Though it might be recorded that between Wapella and Whitewood was found the one and only road-construction gang seen during the whole 500-mile drive across Saskatchewan.

Through Broadview and Grenfell were found stretches of firm, fast going, and at Wolseley we found pleasant homes that invited the traveller to linger. We wish to-day that Wolseley had proven barren and forbidding.

It was high noon of a blistering July day. We had jolted far and fast and I was concerned for the Skipper, who was manifestly distressed.

"Surely these people wouldn't mind our sitting for a little while in the shade of their trees," I said, stopping the car. The Skipper was panting in discomfort but would not hear of taking the liberty. I knocked at the door of the house and begged the necessary permission, which was smilingly given by a girl of about twenty. We proceeded to enjoy a little bit of heaven. I stretched on the cool grass and watched the Skipper toying with some leaves while the troubled

look disappeared. After about ten minutes I heard the swish of a skirt across the lawn from the house. Instinctively I sat up as though to forestall the kind offer of some sort of refreshment, as had so often been made under like conditions. I saw, under an untidy dust-cap, a face that was not a kind face. What is it that makes us more like children when we are far from home, so that we look more particularly at faces, expecting them all to be kind?

This woman had an invitation for us—an invitation to move on!

Burning with humiliation, I murmured something, not insolently, I have since hoped, about Western hospitality, and got into the car. To have subjected my wife to this was a blow. I only remember how, tearfully, she besought me to get away as fast as possible. So we left behind in Wolseley the one unkind, inhuman act felt in five thousand miles of wanderings in two countries.

Passing Sintaluta, Indian Head and Qu'Appelle, we came upon a good road into the capital city of Regina.

Two features of Prairie life that cannot be overlooked are the alkali water and the gophers. The alkali water will get you if you are not careful, and you will get the gophers no matter how careful you are. The only solution I see for ridding the country of these two evils is to have all the gophers drink up all the alkali water.

The Skipper did her best to protect me from alkali water, especially that in Qu'Appelle, but I only laughed and drank. That night, in Regina, she might well

have done the laughing but, being a devoted wife, she only nursed and comforted, just as though she did not have a fool for a husband. I thought it might cheer her up if I blamed it on the iced lemonade at Wolseley, but it didn't!

As an army of the damned, gophers are the most buoyantly optimistic race I ever lived amongst. Every man's hand against them, yet they live a gay and thoughtless life, looking death, in the shape of motor cars, squarely and fearlessly in the face. Suicide statistics are worse than amongst German students, but the tribe shows no sign of decay. The school-children are told from time to time how many gophers there are in the three Provinces, but I do not think the teacher really counted them.

With the three hundred and sixty points of the compass to choose from, these suicide-pacters always run exactly in the wheel-track. I tried at first slowing down to give opportunity for contemplation of their rash act, but this manoeuvre was met by others darting out of their holes between the front and back of the car and taking advantage of the hind wheel of the juggernaut. Very shortly we settled down to a fair average of one death per mile. Casualties amongst the lady gophers are particularly heavy owing to the feminine insistence on the last word. Returning from the sewing-circle or a round of calls, they are just as fond as our own ladies of choosing the middle of the track to say good-bye. The inevitable undecided point vexes them and the one withdrawing first is supposed to have conceded it. Ultimately an all-weather tread becomes the doomsman.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE PURPLE-PAINTED DESERT

We were delayed in Regina until noon on business of less than no importance.

A feature of all long-distance tours, I suppose, is the difference between the time-table planned and the time consumed. You will remember that evening, last winter, around the living-room lamp, when you fixed it all up to travel daily from nine o'clock sharp until six, with half an hour for lunch, at, say, twenty-five miles an hour, which would be good for two hundred and twelve miles per day. Then, the first morning out from home, sister Bessie just wanted first to look at some shopping-bags she noticed in that window last night, and father, getting tired of waiting for her to come back, decides to call on his correspondent in this town after all. Mother runs off to hunt up Bessie, but, going wool-gathering instead of Woolworth—ing, she thinks she might as well get the tie for Jack while she is at it. If the party ever assembles again that morning Uncle Fred, the fourth member, rises to explain that if you are allowing only half an hour for lunch it will have to be a roadside picnic affair. So he and Bess take the thermos bottles to that lunch-counter opposite the station to be filled. When

they call for them twenty minutes later, having secured the homemade bread and the hard-boiled eggs and the bananas, they catch sight of the bottles just where they left them. The fat boy behind the one-time bar had been so busy making hot-dogs that he forgot all about them. At sight of Bessie he seizes them and slides them through the window to the kitchen girl. "What could we do? He had our bottles."

So it transpires that the half-hour lunch you planned has taken fifty-minutes to mobilise. You get away at a quarter past twelve, everybody sticky with the heat and blaming everybody else.

Then you find you cannot make your schedule. It cannot be explained why, but in my experience it has always been the hardest thing in the world to average twenty miles an hour all day. By dint of Father and Uncle Fred driving in turn you manage to make some outlandish place one hundred and thirty-seven miles away by eight o'clock. If the boss of the party is a bullheaded fool—but, thank Heaven, it's generally mother—he tries to make up time next day. But if there are a few grains of sense left in the party, you resolve, that night, to take your time and enjoy yourselves.

Incidentally, however, the forty-five-mile stretch between Regina and Moose Jaw is a good road over which to try making up time. I did not see any moose at the jaw and, from my understanding of a moose country, I do not believe anybody ever did, except at a circus. For that matter nobody ever saw a medicine hat but the city is there, most emphatically.

Moose Jaw is an enterprising city whose chief products are live cattle to the east and live millionaires to British Columbia.

My road notes immediately beyond Moose Jaw are: to Mortlach, 32 miles, falling off, but still very good; much sand. To Parkbeg, becoming very bad. To Secretan—(fireworks).

At one of these places a man offered to save us some bad roads by sending us "over a trail I know." It was comforting, that night, to recall that he knew it, for nobody else did.

In the East we had passed through wild, rocky country where nobody lived, but out here on the prairie with no rocks, no stumps and no Lake Superiors, we expected, I fancy, to see a stock farm every quarter mile, and a church-store-schoolhouse settlement at the corner of each section. But there seem to be no farms, as we understood them, in Saskatchewan. The machinery is stored out in the open, and the grain is alleged to be kept in a shack the same size we have for blasting-powder in British Columbia. There are 800,000 people in Saskatchewan, but 799,860 of them had forgotten to settle on the trans-provincial road. There was something unbelievable about the scarcity of population here and in Alberta. For days we lived along under the unconscious delusion that, very shortly, we would have passed these outposts of settlement, but always, with the passing of another town, we resumed our solitude.

By rail one seems, every minute or so, to glance up from the book with the train stopped alongside some

stores and box-like houses, with a sleepy horse or two hitched to a rail. But the trajectory described by a jogging automobile intersecting this field a thousand miles wide is a most painstaking process, in which a mile's a mile for a' that, and no shirking one howe'er so humdrum.

The descriptions of the last three or four train robberies on the prairie have been most significant as to location. The newspapers said: "The robber or robbers evidently boarded the westbound train shortly after it left Moose Jaw, leaving it again in the neighborhood of Secretan." Although, in one case, the fates twiddled their thumbs the other way, as the despatch read: "The bandit must have boarded the eastbound train at or near Chaplin and then lost himself in the wild country around Secretan."

*Please note that we ourselves have drawn attention to this, and we sincerely trust that the coincidence of our having "lost ourselves somewhere in the wild country around Secretan," just after train time one night, will not suggest anything by imputation.*

The high opinion long held of the good judgment and workmanlike methods of those gentlemen of the red-handkerchief masks is only confirmed here by their choice of a happy hunting ground. I was going to call them highwaymen, but in fact they scorn such poor white trash as those of us who use the highway. And to dub them "railwaymen" would naturally bring a peremptory challenge from the brotherhoods who claim the patent for robbing the public. No, these casual "Hands-up!" fellows scarcely deserve to class

alongside the coercive follow-up system that gets all of us, coming and going. When the frolicsome story of Robin Hood and his merry men grows tasteless and the public demands "The Romance of The Merry Railwaymen" (of 1921) the characters will not refer, except very incidentally, to the distinguished moonlight visitors to the Secretan Hills.

Though I cannot, therefore, quite put our fellow-sojourners in the rank of railwaymen, we would have welcomed them and treated them with equal respect on this particular occasion I have in mind, for it was powerful lonesome.

As, in that sunset hour, we curled and rounded endlessly amongst the velvety brown hills of the far-flung virgin prairie a feeling of near-romance possessed us which was hard to define. Here and there appeared and disappeared the well-marked buffalo trails of an earlier age. The hills were very much of a size—about that of the full swells from the open Pacific seen outside Vancouver Island. I think we had come about fifteen miles through this scene of peaceful monotony, scene untouched by the hand of man, although his foot was apparent in the half-concealed double scroll lacing on for ever in the trough of those amber waves.

"There's a long lasso-like trail a-winding to the land of my dreams," murmured the Skipper, who is my chief magician and interpreter of dreams. Compelled at last, by the novelty of it all and the magic of the almost horizontal rays of light over our heads, we stopped and helped each other in half a minute to the crest of a knoll. Without end as the earth had seemed

from those shallow valleys, the dipping sun revealed from here such a limitlessness of light-tipped pin-cushions as at once to suggest,

"I am monarch of all I survey;  
My right there is none to dispute.  
From the centre all round to the sea  
I am Lord of the fowl and the brute."

Far beyond our measure of sight, on, on in every direction to the end of imagination, the sapphire crowned hills receded to infinity. The dulled glare of that setting half-orange in the north-west enlivened the billows in its path to an illusive, dancing motion, so that, more than ever, one beheld a boundless expanse of waves.

"Now for a painted ship to put upon this painted ocean," sighed the unsatisfied, extortionate Skipper.

"There," I waved down at our breathing four-wheeler, "is the only ship that's going to save you from this painted ocean."

"And there," she pointed quickly to the right, "is the sea wolf."

Sure enough there he went, loping his solitary flight through the hollows. We had frightened up a wolf or two on former occasions, but this one seemed of a larger species. We dismissed his wolfship from our thoughts.

The cool expectation that, after our view across the peopleless void, we would sail into a town in a few minutes is just one of those dishonored cheques on the bank of vain faith so frequently issued by vagabonds of our type. The heartiest sign of civilization we found

was a barbwire fence. It was not even a sympathetic barbwire fence, for it spread across our "road" with the same superior indifference it showed for gopher-holes. That its posts had attained an age of greyness was a sign ominous for our chance of guidance from fellow travellers. We could have left the trail anywhere and driven in any direction, but that feature of it was like having a year's holiday and nowhere to go. When I realized that darkness was falling I was nervous; at least I was thirsty, which was worse. The wolf, the gophers and the mosquitoes were surely harmless enough, but our radiator had taken all the contents of our two-gallon water-bag to combat the fierce heat of the day, and the prospect of no water until some time to-morrow was serious.

Barbwire fences on the prairie do not start or finish, they just run. But by the same token they can frequently be relied on to run somewhere.

We found a little shack of two rooms, but within those two rooms we found the stock-in-trade for a complete prairie novel, the perfect stage-setting for a drama of the plains and, to us, the first close-up of actual fighting in the settlers' vast war of conquest against rough nature.

On our roamings we had driven through sizable cities the memory of which vanished like the mist of morning, but this foundationless board shack made a profound, a prophetic impress on us. Standing there alone on the unscratched surface of a new world, from which the rain of population had been so long withheld, it was easy to look, with the Angel of Time, into the

faces of its past and its future. Only a few years ago the servant of Elijah, looking from the top of Carmel, might have said "There is nothing!" To-day, descrying this shack, this chip on the waves, he would report, "Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man's hand," and, to-morrow, the prophet will record, "And it came to pass in the meanwhile, that the heaven was black with clouds and there was a great rain."

Within-doors of this "little cloud" of to-day, amid the litter of a household that had never felt a woman's hand, neglect unbelievable but actual, were signs of the soul. Violin and clarionet on the wall, music—good music—on the stand, and books of solid stuff, two photos, that subtly suggested a connection with the handwriting on those envelopes, and, behold! a bucket of water.

The Skipper is a camel whose day to drink is Thursday, but I drank eagerly and praised the Lord.

We cast our tent close by and prepared for a quiet evening and an undisturbed night. I had often dreamed of lodging as the one infinitesimal speck on the bald face of creation; vast desert everywhere, infinite solitude, chill moon, myriad stars and all that Garden of Allah stuff. In the undiscovered ruggedness of British Columbia, driven to the lake shore by a night gale, I have rolled in a blanket and slept on the floor of a primeval forest. But a woman as a rule does not enjoy these things, except in stories. The Skipper, for example, now summoned up from the vasty deep the spirit of our late acquaintance, the wolf. I promised to lie awake and shoot him, but she knew

the promise was worthless. I am a bad shot, but an excellent sleeper.

Just before we turned in we could not resist once more going upon a knoll. The hills here were higher, and our gaze was quickly drawn to a tiny, blinking light far off on the prairie. Heaven was full of golden pin-points, constellations and milky ways, but into our hearts there shone, probably ten or twenty miles away, just that one live spark on the whole round world. It is all very well to adore sublime, untamed nature, but the one sordid touch of human life will draw you just the same. For a long time we watched and wondered about that one warm flickering light, while the myriad cold orbs of night twinkled on unnoticed and unfelt.

## CHAPTER XIX

### IMMEMORIAL PRAIRIE AND FRESH VARNISH

Had it not been for that one night in our wee tent amongst the dull brown Secretan hills, a tenfold symphony orchestra of mosquitoes in attendance, the Skipper and I must once again have crossed the Prairie without feeling its pulse.

By the railway-train method one has a glimpse of the prairie, by driving across it and lodging in cities and villages he perhaps gets on speaking terms, but to feel the beat of its great rugged heart he must spend silent, thoughtful hours close to the warm living body of it. Finally, of course, nobody can actually know the prairie without putting his hand literally to the plough.

It is worth mentioning that, both evening and morning, the mosquitoes touched us not. An application of the lotion enabled me, sleeveless and collarless, to move freely amongst the buzzing press, unwept, unharassed and unstung. A skilful tentmaker in Vancouver (C. H. Jones) had outfitted me, and our tent seemed everything-proof. One polite little cigarette for perfumery, accompanied by a hintful pointing toward the open flap and the white man's burden forsook us and his bloodthirsty routine like mice before the avenging cat.

It was easy enough by daylight to find a trail and, five miles along, we met "the boys" coming home from a remote dance. Far from resenting our admiration of their sweethearts' photographs, they begged us almost tearfully to turn back and honor them again. The description by these young Englishmen of the utter loneliness of their present lives in that shack was indeed one of our most serious memories.

When we stopped at Chaplin that morning for breakfast the heat was intense. By the time we reached Herbert, at eleven o'clock, the Skipper was well nigh overcome. Nevertheless when some kind friends took us to their home it was worse, and we realized that salvation for us lay in motion. We pushed on, and never have I placed such store by continuity of motion as I did that sizzling noonday, far, far from a sheltering leaf.

Descending into Swift Current, the "Red Trail" we were travelling suffered a puncture. At least it went suddenly very flat. Wrong again! It was only as a boom-town road that it was flat; otherwise it was very un—flat. An ambitious settler had evidently pre-empted the land across which the main road into Swift Current came, and we must needs turn abruptly and follow the pre-emptor's wire boundary, finally thumping down a long hill in a series of terraces. In other words, the road having been taken for a farm, we were left literally to our own devices to scratch a way into town.

Swift Current proved to be a very attractively trim town (city finances, I understand, sadly trim-

med), with unusual public spirit and supported by a very substantial business. Like most prairie towns the thickness of butter on its bread follows the wheat crop.

That night we lodged with a delightful family at Webb, leaving the car just under our window. Very early in the morning I examined it and found the top; the unshaded portions of the seats and the metal work so hot that they burned my hands. "Come along," I called, "and leave off everything but your sunshade material. It's going to be a growler."

A hundred and twenty-five miles we went that day, passing six towns at practically exact intervals of nineteen miles—Gull Lake, so called apparently because they have no lake and no gulls; Tomkins, where the church bells persuaded us almost to be Christians; Piapot, which really should try again for a name; Maple Creek, a bright spot in the former range country with inviting homes and some really-truly trees; Hatton, where half a dozen men broke up a beer party to tell us it was a privilege to see the pathfinding car, and finally the hamlet of Walsh on the Alberta border and the flourishing German town of Irvine.

In mid-afternoon we passed a country church. As we were now getting close to the ensnaring mountains, we decided to "get religion." Inside, one could hear the perspiration dropping as from a leaky waterpipe. Everything stuck to everything else. For example just in front of us a young lady stuck to the seat which had been recently varnished. It was a young people's service and at the end of the sermon the preacher said,

"All who have no fear for the final reckoning, please stand."

As I had a pair of whipcord knicks I had no fear at all. The Skipper, who had gradually and stealthily been pulling herself away from the varnish, had only a little fear. The congregation in general thoughtlessly concluded that the easiest course would be at least not to show fear, but the ripping chorus that ensued told them that in reality they had dared much. One boy burst both back buttons, but presence of mind and a hitch at his breeches saved him from the minister's eye. The young lady tried three times to have no fear, but though one's courage may be as the lion's, one's dress may yet be merest muslin. She just stuck. The minister eyed her, pained but patient. Then he made a motion like a musical conductor asking for a high note. She made a determined effort in response, and all the young men behind went poppy-eyed in speculation. The Skipper laid a finger on my chin preparatory to turning my head away in case of emergency, but the girl sat fast. It was not so much a fear for the final reckoning. I suggested, as a fear of the immediate reckoning with those boys in the back rows.

The varnish quite brightened up our day.

Readers will have noticed that my story has been reading like a time-table, but I cannot help it. That is exactly what the prairie part of the trip degenerates into. Yet the motorist will learn much from it. At the end he will know Canada.

The rail journey, Montreal to Vancouver, lasts one hundred hours. Half of this time it is dark or the passenger is asleep; of the remainder he reads, eats, plays cards or studies his neighbours six hours a day, leaving, say, twenty-five hours in all to look out at Canada. The motorist drives across in thirty days of nine driving hours. Of the remaining daily fifteen hours he spends probably five in seeing the cities and towns or entertaining himself generally—outdoors. In addition he stops off a day here and there, to see the country.

Thus, in our own case, we spent five hundred hours looking at the country. If I wanted to stop looking at the country long enough to have a bite, tie my shoe or blow my nose, the train had to be stopped meanwhile. It is scarcely to be expected, therefore, that I shall allow that the man who has spent twenty-five hours looking at Canada knows it as well as we do.

We had now come into the great range country, romantic atmosphere of my school days. It was just a bit of an effort to realize that these long, loose-jointed cowboys who dashed up to a store for supplies or sauntered lazily over the range were not part of a moving picture concern. To look at a herd of sheep, cattle and horses peppering a far-off hillside with one black gnat of a chappered guardian on the edge sitting his horse carelessly, seemed to express so much of our world of books and of fancy. When we met the cowboys face to face they returned our salutations with civility, but barely so much. It was painfully, glumly apparent that they scorned non-cowboys. They

scorned us in particular, our curiosity, our clothes and our vehicle.

At Irvine we remained over a day, as our host told us they were "putting on" a stampede." Next morning the streets swarmed with cowboys who yelled to one another about "pulling off" this stampede. One might have become highly excited at the prospect of some sort of dressing and undressing contest or struggle, but it seems that "pulling off" and "putting on" are one and the same process when they refer to a stampede, which turned out to be a composite game played by horses to win applause, which is taken credit for by their riders, who wildly wave their hats aloft and scream.

Medicine Hat we found to possess quite a Metropolitan atmosphere. Natural gas, I understand, provides the family with light, heat, toaster and hair-curlers for about fifty cents a month. Medicine Hat is notable in my business as being the first place in Canada in which bank loans were made on the security of horses and cattle on the hoof. I use the term in a sense to imply "on the wing." As the storing of the collateral in the customary pigeonhole in the safe presented a knotty problem, the bank had to depend on the horse sense of its security not to wander too many hundred miles towards the Missouri River. To the bank inspector the security was very much "The substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

It is from Medicine Hat that the road branches to the Banff entrance to the mountains, via Calgary,

a splendid city which few trans-Canada motorists will care to miss.

On through the quaintly named Seven Persons, Bow Island and Grassy Lake to the Mormon country around Taber, we moved ever westward. The "Red Route" becomes a very thin red line at times, the opening and closing of barnyard gates to get through being a mere circumstance.

Each day at what would have been the tea hour, had there been any tea, the declining rays of the sun peeped in under the car-top, crept up the Skipper's duster-coat button by button until it lighted her countenance and of course blinded her eyes. We had a convenient acquaintance whose name sounded like Longthroat and whose swanlike neck rivalled the ostrich in its dip-and-rise usefulness. We envied this worthy lady, envied her by name, every afternoon. As the dazzling western glare relentlessly covered first my collar, then my teeth and my nose, the Skipper would say, "Try and be a Mrs. Longthroat and you can hold it off a few minutes longer." I Mrs. Longthroat—ed it until my wind-pipe was the shape of a gracefully drawn bow, and then, bringing my face doggedly down to the wheel, peered ahead through the yellow glasses and as narrow a slit as my eyelids would make.

On we plugged, drawn by the hope that trees and splashing brooks were always coming nearer. We had loved the prairie, felt genuine affection for it, would not have missed it for anything, but, at certain moments, we felt as though we might perhaps love the extreme western edge of it best of all!

## CHAPTER XX

### THE GREAT EVENT

"Look! what is that?" spoke the Skipper.

It was mid-afternoon. The oozing heat had driven us from our room at four o'clock that morning, and all day through I had gripped that jerking wheel while there crept grudgingly beneath our tires, that limitless, endless plain, that beardless face of nature so velvety and smooth everywhere save underneath our creaking, groaning car. The shimmering dance of the sun's waves reflected from the earth no longer had my attention, and, hours ago, I had tired of the amusement of watching the eddying spirals of twisted heat, those miniature tornadoes that, in pursuit of one another, swirled across the prairie ahead of their long tails of curling dust.

Only once have I actually fallen asleep at the wheel, but the present occasion was one of many on which one of us was in a semi-comatose condition. To offer a remark to the other and be completely unnoticed was the symptom. But when one has lived a month or two, largely isolated night and day from one's fellows and literally by the side of one woman, and that one woman's sympathy and smiles and tears are all that you have known of human companionship

through experiences that have lifted you and her to the peak of elation and thrust you to the bottomless pit of despair: why, it comes about that your ear grows as finely attuned to the emotions behind that voice as is the ear of the aesthetic who, through the rude sounds of earth, listens to the unearthly music of the spheres.

When my wife, out of a long silence, remarked, "Look, dear; what is that? Can it be—?" I slowly caught the hope and exultation in her voice and recognized the imminence of the lurking fear of a great new adventure.

For a few moments I held my gaze stiffly to those parallel dark streaks in the grass, hesitating in bridled excitement like a man who has been ordered to raise his head to receive sentence. Then I stopped the car and looked ahead and to the right.

Away off on the western horizon they lay, for all the world like a streak of ruffled white bedclothes, with there and yon a pillow corner jutting an inch above the level of the weirdly motionless pile. I have heard of a bride witnessing her own wedding ceremony as an unbelieving, dreaming bystander, and it was thus that we gazed in unbelieving, tired fascination at that far-flung snowline of our hopes. Slowly it came to me that this spot, so exactly like thousands of other spots on those roads of broad silences, stood for the supreme moment of it all.

Through the dancing heat and the whining wind, and far removed from the waving table of grain stretching towards it from our feet into invisibility,

there was something inflexibly motionless about that row of uneven snowy folds that filled us with wonder and reflection. That odd realization which had become a part of us, the iron rule, "Go on, if hell cracks," came upon us now with flinty emphasis, as we gazed on those awesome Rocky Mountains, the most formidable barrier the world has placed in the motorist's path.

Then, as impulsively we sought one another's hands, a new thought possessed us. As my wife's smile turned bravely from my eyes to that sharp west horizon I knew that our minds were one. For, now, we were looking again at this approaching peril, that great multiple chain of granite, the earth's backbone, five hundred miles across and ten thousand miles long, and remembering that, to us, it meant—Home.

## CHAPTER XXI

### IN THE JAWS OF THE ROCKIES

The following peep of day—and just between that first waking peep and the eventual yawn that brings full consciousness—I was puzzled as to the curious sensation of buoyant elation and novelty which, it must be allowed, is not the persistent feature of a long tour. It is an odd trick of memory: that while the event itself may not be remembered, its pleasant or unpleasant effects completely possess one's mind.

There quickly followed the recollection of how we had first seen the mountains, passed into the green, humid coolness of irrigated lands and finally on to the pavements of Lethbridge; how we had walked during the evening in the Galt Gardens and had seemed rude to our hosts because we instinctively kept turning away from their remarks, which were ancient, and in the direction of the glorious hills and the sunset glow, which were new.

We had learned the wisdom of allowing the dawn only a small start of us, so six o'clock found us grinding down into the abyss known as the *coulee* of the Belly River and then up the other wall into the sunlight of the prairie once more. Ten miles farther along, our road dived again to those same rushing waters of

icy opalescence in the bottom of that fearful gash the Belly has worn across the smooth-shaven face of Alberta. Gazing awhile into the swift depths of melted snow and realizing the power that has sliced out this gulch in the land, those mountains we watch are no longer mere lazy giants, but rather a city of white tents covering vast forces of nature, destructive engines and hidden lightnings.

You may have crossed the Great Divide in many places from California to Alaska, as I had, but the first time you are guided to it by your own hand will nevertheless be the great crossing. Inasmuch as every man demands to trace the origin of all things—in the secret belief that they cannot really be without his acquiescence—so, in approaching this formidable, ever-blacker, ever-rising wall obscuring the world beyond, it is but natural vanity which prompts the empire-building explorer in his throbbing benzine-bus picturesquely to ignore the fact that men before him have found the way and to enquire of his dauntless spirit: "How had I better tackle it? I don't see any hole through and I can't very well ride over the tops."

These puny wheeltracks, which fade altogether from sight in a few hundred yards, seem utterly incapable of persisting amongst those now threatening peaks whose vast sides are torn by avalanches, or bared in steps of storm-browned precipices a thousand feet to a lift.

We had ample time for these and many thoughts. One does not run amuck of the Rocky Mountains unexpectedly like a "Bridge Closed" sign or a street full

of school children. The hills will be the cause of quick breaths and heart-swallowings in due course, but there really is no danger of your hot radiator boring a hole in a glacier, or of slipping brakes permitting your car to nick a chunk out of the chiselled skyline. The spot from which we commenced to stalk our prey was over a hundred miles from where we began the first real climb. So we made a leisurely study of the trick by which railway surveyors steal from nature the secret of the "pass" by following up one watercourse to its source, looking about for another which trickles down the farther slope, and forthwith seizing its right of way also. We wondered if, happily, the stream we were shadowing into the snow summits would prove to be one of those fortunate ones which is continuous right across, by the division of some diminutive rivulet on the very apex of the pass. We fancied ourselves throwing in a chip and, by the mere flick of a lead pencil, giving it a through ticket to the Pacific or to Hudson's Bay.

Passing through the town of Macleod (once Fort Macleod, the extreme outpost of Hudson's Bay Company civilization), with its Mounted Police barracks and quaint old missions, we entered the wide Blood Indian reservation. The grimmer aspects were gradually but sternly calling my thoughts. Though we were yet perhaps thirty miles from the foot of the Great Wall it was, I thought, high time to begin feeling nervous. While wondering if the Skipper was feeling much depressed at the prospect, we came upon an old squaw waddling under a wide-brimmed hat of mid-

Victorian fashion. She was built somewhat on the plan of a sea lion, carried a series of huge round bundles, and bore the facial humor of a corpseless head.

"Look," said I, "at Minne-ha-ha."

"Exactly!" chirped the Skipper. "The ha-ha seems to be on Minne."

This settled it. She was not the scared one.

An Indian reserve usually means merely retarded development; so we found the country beyond Macleod uninhabited low hills. I remember running through a shallow valley, for miles it seemed, on an even *down* grade. It was discouraging, as when, bent on economy, one finds oneself obliged to spend some more money. Road signs of any kind were lacking and a mistaken turning in a wooded creek-land brought us, of all places, to the gate of an orphanage. As I tapped on an open door and called softly once or twice for attention, it struck us both forcibly, if still ludicrously, that so many little children should be singing and reciting in apparent forgetfulness of those towering sky-ornaments overhanging their peaceful valley which, any moment, they might snuff out of existence by throwing down a few splinters. Also it seemed almost disrespectful that teachers should remain severely at their posts and men go on grabbing in the fields on this, the wonderful day when we were to start our conquest of the mountains. Such a perfect day for it too! Doubtless you have all felt the same way—for instance, when store-keepers insisted on taking in money while your wedding carriage was passing.

The roads of Alberta, so creditable behind, now fell off shockingly in quality as we neared their end. All along we heard the same comment, "Poor till you get into British Columbia; then splendid."

About two o'clock we passed the town of Pincher Creek, nestling prosperously on the very last of the great plains. We were still in the open, although woolly clouds at the moment haloed the heads of two sentinel mountains directly to right and left, and we began to experience the first of a long series of breath-catchings as, to the eye, the road comes to an abrupt end on the edge of a chasm or against a dark cliff.

We had been closely following the Old Man River and now forked up its tributary, the Crow's Nest, beholding it, there, a circling endless lariat in a gorge of majestic width into which we must drive with tense cautiousness, now, a sounding torrent beneath a bridge. Here I rested a minute, drawing breath and expelling it like a spouting whale in a tenfold sigh, and giving my muscles a relaxation before commencing the next climb.

After this I remember making several right and left turns and curves to unascertained points of the compass, blindly following the road, doubling and redoubling on its course, plunging and rising every now and then till my eyes stood out like a new made frog's—leaving scenery to the scene-shifters or anybody interested—but as yet scaling no mountains.

Then, as we ran on to a level stretch, I heard the Skipper exclaim, "Oh-h-h, look, man! Do stop here a minute."

Laying aside gloves, goggles and steering-wheel, I obeyed.

From every conceivable angle we were hemmed in by stupendous heavenly mounds of rock and ice, rock and snow, rock and forest, and then more and more and more rock, piled cliff upon cliff. There was no north, south, east or west. It was as impossible for us to tell from which direction we had come as to have guessed the way out. The where-am-I individual who waked up on Mars was sitting at the head of his own table compared to me.

I wiped off the sweat of those poppy-eye roads while wondering how it had been possible to be drawn into this grim ambushade of stupendous, amazing nature without noticing it. Then I looked straight up to where those axe-like pinnacles cleaved their way through the summer clouds, and murmured in unrehearsed reverence, "Great God!"

Before the tourist's car is actually in the mountains he always entertains the possibility of turning back, but here was no turning back any more than your canoe turns back after it is caught in the swirl of the rapids.

A few minutes we sat there, resting and realizing. We were being treated to a worm's-eye view of the glory of the Lord—and less than twenty-four hours back we were jolting over the seemingly boundless prairie with never a hillock or a stone in the world.

## CHAPTER XXII

### ONCE SHY, TWICE BITTEN

From the point where the ambushade was "sprung" to the Great Divide, say thirty-five miles, was very much what the untravelled reader might suppose, plus two hundred per cent. more for what he can only dream. For example, there is the Frank Slide. Some years ago half of Turtle Mountain (6,500 feet) fell away and buried the valley, lapping up the railway, the highway and the town of Frank.

Instinctively one falls to imagining the death of a community under a falling mountain of rock—and with fluttering repellence turns the eyes of the mind elsewhere.

As the height of an object may be determined by the length and angle of its shadow, so the up-rearing of the granite mass of Turtle is newly conceived in its shadow of death across that valley. By aid of sledge-hammer, blasting-powder and filling, a passage has been made over the debris. Snorting, banging and grating horribly in the process, the motor ascends the grim incline, a little mountain in itself. The remaining scalloped out half of the mountain is apparently two miles or more to the left, and the limit of the slide is somewhere out of sight to the right.

The inquisitive, but untrained, mind busies itself estimating how many units of force, and what height of a bounce, are necessary to hurl stones the size of a six or ten roomed house across a valley and miles out from the bottom of their perpendicular drop. The answer does not come easily, so he forgets it while something impels him back to the human element. If by some powerful hand one could reach the underneath of this vast, jagged pile, and tenderly lift the splintered remains of a miner's cottage, pick up one or two of the children's toys and—but again the brain recoils from the quest.

Taken to ourselves, Turtle Mountain had its encouraging aspect. If we did slip off this ledge, notched on the side of the Rockies, which on the law of probabilities seemed more assured than not, our labelled remains would at least be delivered later at the proper address.

Passing on towards the mines of Blairmore and Coleman, through the new town of Frank, housewives of various dialects of central and southern Europe were busily hanging their washings, while scantily-clad children played in the streets, because to them the Frank calamity was only an old tradition.

Every curve rounded brought us face to face with a new masterpiece of Jehovah. On the one hand the massive cone of Crow's Nest Mountain, ten thousand feet of the Tower of Babel bathed in wonderful and varying lights, its icy crest sliced off by a wedge of gliding cloud, while straight in front—uprearing with what import?—stood the phenomenon we called the

Mountain of the Five Fingers. These stubby columns of granite, held up for all the world like a human hand amongst the neighboring tops, had at this moment of razor-edged nerves a curious effect indeed.

Soon we reached Crow's Nest Lake, called "The Birthplace of the Prairie Winds," but to-day a rippleless, green jewel surrounded by cliffs sometimes thousands of feet high. The creeping automobile circles around these on a thread-like road which is nevertheless perfectly safe. Though generally only a few feet wider than the car, there are regular turning-out places well marked by two crossed boards on a high pole—and in reality not at all suggestive of cross-bones! Just beyond the lake we passed the railway station of Crow's Nest, where a sign-board and a neatly contrived parting of the stream in a trim flower-bed loudly proclaims "Great Divide." The whole thing is a fitting crown to Divine Nature—just like finding chewing gum for sale on the top of Mount Everest.

Spurting up a hill both steep and high, we found ourselves tossed on to a narrow ledge of a precipitous, shrub-grown hillside. Here, clearly, passing another vehicle was impossible. A quarter mile of such road sounds a short drive, but it is a long time to hold one's breath! We drove fully that distance with chances of turning out quite hopeless. Then appeared a man on horseback, seemingly a cowboy, though I have never been sure. Passing room for even an

equestrian was out of the question. At fifty paces we both stopped and stared at one another. To be non-plussed by a traffic problem, even to hold a pow-wow about it, was not beneath my dignity, but it was far beneath a cowboy's. To have discussed the matter with "one of them city dudes who, at home, probably wore a 'biled' shirt" would have been almost the same with "the boys" on the range as his appearance at the round-up in a side-saddle wearing a bowler hat.

Laying the end of the reins smartly on his horse's flank, the rider forced his animal about twenty feet up the steep incline, turned to face us and scornfully switched his arm westward ordering me to proceed. Although I did this very cautiously, the manoeuvre was too much for the prairie steed. Just as we came underneath, he became frantic and, first plunging, then rolling, he came down on our little car, smashing the mud-guard, one headlight and a few more ornaments of our mantelpiece. The rider was thrown heavily, his legs being well under the front axle when the car stopped. The horse had scrambled up and made off down the trail ahead of us, bleeding freely from a long cut in the hind quarters. The cowboy, his very muteness declaring his rage and humiliation, leaped to his feet and ran after the beast. He called sharply a single word that we could not catch, but which brought the well-trained animal to an instantaneous stop about a hundred and fifty yards ahead. Springing into the saddle, and with just a perceptible impatience in the jerk of the reins, he

spurred the quivering horse up the hillside again, this time going up fifty or sixty feet, as though to afford us plenty of warning in case the animal got the toboggan panic again.

As we drove past in safety I put my head out and saluted up to the horseman, who reciprocated with all the warmth and respect I had found cow-boys to have for motorists. Never at any time did the Skipper or I open our mouths to this sphinx and, in that at least, felt that we had met him on his own ground. I had the feeling also that, had I said "How'dy," he would have cantered after us and cuffed my ears!

This incident, although happening a few hundred yards inside the British Columbia line, did not help us to feel exactly at home.

For many miles we ran, now downhill, with Michel Creek bound Pacificwards. The road was enveloped in cool foliage on this side of the summit and, lulled by the gentle splashing, we seemed to forget our surroundings for the time. The recurring glimpse of the grey-brown bulk of another hoary giant protruded itself intermittently through the leaves, but was of interest as impersonal as a passing cloud.

At Michel town, gloomy, grimy with forbidding, barrack-like boarding-houses, we executed a wide sweep to the south towards Fernie, in conformity with the course of the Elk River, into which the creek had now emptied, and emerged on a road half-way up a mountain side and overlooking a broad valley, on the far side of which an interminable

awkward squad of the everlasting hills loomed higher in perspective and unexplorable in aspect.

So often on our tour we experienced the odd conflict in our own brains of instinct versus common sense. There is a cable tramway across the Fraser River above Yale which illustrates the point. After a look at the sagging cable, becoming a fading thread in the distance, the tenderfoot is told to sit in the bucket and immediately feels himself sliding out from the solid rock into empty space and down to the bottom of that ghastly sag with the seething waters a hundred feet below. It is all very well to appeal to his common sense that it must be perfectly safe; his instinct shouts to him that it is perfect madness. In the same way the motorist, seeing himself hemmed in by unnumbered ranks of hostile, terrifying mountains, when told by his common sense that he can run his automobile across and out of it all by an easy road, discovers that his instinct doesn't believe a word of it!

A thunder storm swept the valley, the first drop of rain we had felt since Lake Superior. The combination of the flash and the crash on that narrow road prompted us to stand aside awhile. It was here the part of wisdom to obey the impulse to put on anti-skid chains, but the role of Wisdom in our life-play that afternoon was being taken by Excitement. Half an hour later, while running fast, I felt the hind legs of our car kick suddenly sideways on the rain-greased road. One, two, three sickening lurches in succession we felt toward the forbidding edge. To

use the brakes would have been fatal; it looked fatal anyway. At my shout the Skipper sprang to the running board, for I thought we were over. Then, as the wheels gripped on a patch of rough gravel, I gave a last twist of the steering-wheel and the car swung heavily back into the tracks.

I have always thought that the Skipper and I were nearer to death in those moments than at any other time in our lives.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### THE END OF A PERFECT GUESS

There were many things about Fernie we wanted to remember, but could not. There was also one thing we tried hard to forget, but could not. Of course we are above superstitious notions and all that sort of thing; still it is without doubt quite noticeable how often mishappenings mishappen in threes. At a very pleasant dinner-party we renewed old Vancouver acquaintances, were escorted to other homes and places of interest and subsequently delivered at our hotel. But through it all and through a night of dreams we sneakily admitted to our non-superstitious minds that the falling horse and the fearsome skid, though real enough, were only a pair.

The man who puts new names on the map is usually rated a crank while doing it. Particularly is he an irresponsible visionary who wants to put old places on the map in black-faced type. A few years ago Fernie was known by the black faces of its miners; to-day it is known to thousands of visitors as a black-faced point on their itinerary. I was not surprised to hear the man who effected this referred to as "a bit of a crank."

Driving into Fernie and metaphorically laying aside reins and whip and shaking out his pipe while he says "Whoa!" the traveller takes time to look around—and gasps. The mountains are so high that one instinctively puts out his hand to prevent them slipping. It is an important supply point on the road for a hundred miles east and west. This road, especially that twenty miles of it coastwards to Elko, truly beggars all description.

As a youngster I was struck by the fact that my path to any objective point worth while (were it county fair, visiting circus or the good old-fashioned game of hookey) was barred by a wall of difficulty. Later in life one is again struck by the fact that the road which is not barred by a difficult wall leads nowhere in particular. So here we were, our objective east and west, and the formidable mountain walls north and south. In these parts of God's footstool Messrs. Lords-of-Creation suddenly discover themselves very much the under-dogs of creation. The high board fence of the old days which cruelly and completely enveloped the show-grounds to teach us the value of overcoming obstacles has its grownup counterpart in the seemingly insurmountable Rockies and Selkirks. The missing-tooth freckle-face who sleuths along the circus tent seeking the vulnerable spot is merely in training to become the future blazer of railways and highways through the Rocky Mountains.

The pre-man-age surveyors spying out the land, looked east and west from Fernie—rather east-

heavenward and west-heavenward—and decided to let the bears and mountain goats solve it. Then they ran up and down looking for a hole in the wall and, according to their custom, secured a passage for this purpose on the ticket issued by nature to a mountain stream, in this instance the Elk River, tumultuously fulfilling its destiny in its search for the sea.

On the road to Elko, they told us, there are three hundred turns, not counting possible turnovers. The road is smooth as braid and, like braid, it is narrow, and laid on the edges of things. In following it our car described Cupid's bows and bow-knots on the mountain sides, anon shinning around a sharp bluff, and then boring back into the elbow of some gulch, merely to be bounced out so suddenly as almost to make us rear up on our hind wheels.

The rule of the road in this part of British Columbia had been changed by law a few days previously from left to right, and all drivers were nervous. At the horn the Skipper sounded a "Last Post" all the way and, whenever we met a car, we adopted a retiring disposition, disputing none of its rights, traditional, hereditary or legal. I was a firm believer that accidents never happen when you expect them, so I expected one every minute. My partner helped to strangle the hoodoo by expressing certainty that as, in years, I had never made a false driving move, I never would. We were pitting our best logic against an illogical "hunch." Our consciences were clear, so was the sky and the road, until—

Around a kink in that braid, on two wheels, dashed a small car. It was driven by the telephone line-man who was just then whiling away dull care by dreaming of the Tacoma speedway. Then, as his locked rear wheels vainly ripped up the road and we were given one and two-fifths seconds to say our prayers, my mind was swiftly occupied with questions suggested by excitation, self-preservation and the recent legislation. An instant's conflict of decision, and, defying law, logic and learning, I turned sharply to the left, and met him head-on. The sharp crash of collision, followed by the snapping of parts and the flow of hot water left the telephone-man and ourselves posed in mutual regard. The enemy's windshield draped itself noisily over the engine bonnet, his front axle became an angled bow and the whole cab jolted forward eight or ten inches from its moorings, allowing the steering wheel to deal the speed-dealer a neat solar plexus blow, which somewhat delayed his thoughtful, if excited, exclamation, "My God! Did I hit you?"

I walked around to examine the state of the interlocked horns of the two butters, while the Skipper sat for some time unable to move at all. A cut knee discovered later doubtless had something to do with the temporary paralysis.

The hello-man climbed the nearest telephone pole and wired Fernie for help. In due course we were pried apart, two mechanics applied first aid to our car and lent us a couple of crutches with which to hobble back to the garage. They performed various

passes and incantations over the wreck of our antagonist, but, as there was little response, the lot of us lifted the fore-paws of Maude (such being the community name for the ancient and honorable chariot) on to the back of the relief expedition, and conducted her to the hospital as a sulky.

The owner, after laying away a piece of plate glass as a souvenir of his faithful windshield, affectionately stroked the mangled remains of the mohair top of his car before tossing it four hundred feet into the Elk River canyon. He then sat smiling on the apex of the salvaged remains, to ride home. He was a good fellow, if he was a speedster. We spent part of the evening together, and I had considerable argument inducing him to believe I was to blame equally with himself. My total repairs came to one hundred and twenty dollars; the last I heard of Maude was that all attempts to administer cylinder oil resulted only in lubricating the roadway beneath.

At various times during the day the Skipper caught me mumbling incoherently, "Twenty-five dollars," "Twenty-five dollars." Finally I had to confess that, once it was certain no scalps were missing, and no bones broken, the heart of the treasure-loving owner turns to the exemption clause in his collision policy.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### THE BROKEN TRAIL IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

They worked on our car all night. By the early daylight it looked like a job done in the dark, but I knew from painful experience that car beauty is a poor thing, only paint deep, and the man insisted that its digestion and wind were sound. He proved it by driving it out of town himself. Even our brakes would almost stop the car. I investigated this feature particularly because the ever-thoughtful inhabitants had done their little best to puncture the Skipper's dwindling baloon of enthusiasm with the needle of fright anent the notorious Morrisey Hill. A few miles beyond the scene of our disastrous argument of yesterday it lay—it stood.

A signboard at the foot commands the heaven-bound to go into low gear to commence with and to stand pat. Lame knee and all, the Skipper decided to walk it. Her idea of a hill was from the wharf up to the business section. She had never dreamed of a hill like this one, and in fact has no fancy for dreaming about it even to-day. From fairly high land at the base this Morrisey Hill lifts for over a mile on grades up to twenty-one per cent. But when

you are up, *you are up*. Here was the climax of our motoring from Montreal to Vancouver. Just as one's impression of a city's extent, as seen from the street level, is altered when the beholder is on a high roof, so this boundless city of mountains was now altered for us as we steered along the tenth storey cornice, so to speak, of those twelve-storey heights of the world.

Far, far below, still curving with the Elk's shining surface was the railway. From the windows of the swinging train, passengers gaze into the thickly-wooded butt-ends of the towering mountains, and catch glimpses of the immediately surrounding summits, but we on the tenth floor, floating amongst the clouds, are companions to snowy spires, domes, saddles, cathedral-backs and tented tops. Just as the newest telescope but peers farther into the limitless universe of stars, showing hundreds instead of one, so our point of vantage there on the roof of the globe but added to our sense of littleness as, peak upon peak, chain upon chain, the vast, intricate maze of creation came crowding up. At black midnight, it is hard to picture bright noonday, and now, from this centre all round to the limit of imagination, it seemed preposterous to picture anything on earth but faces of rock, feathery forests and far-flung ranks of snow-caps.

Dropping down off our high perch into Elko, we fell victims to a common frailty of weak humanity. Once, as a reward for a lifetime's hard work, an old friend took his wife and daughters to see the per-

sonally-conducted world, "Especially the cathedrals," he told me. Within a week of his boat's arrival I was told he flatly refused to stir from the carriage cushions to mount eighteen steps into one of the most celebrated cathedrals in Europe. Here at Elko, a bare mile off the main highway, was a waterfall of famous beauty. With all summer before us to collect close-ups of Rocky Mountain scenes, we suddenly determined that the only possible business for which we had ten minutes to spare was the business of getting home. Any attraction that required so much extra driving must enter its name on the waiting list until next trip.

Albeit a happening that day forced us to turn and retrace five miles of the raggediest of those raggedy-edged roads, and the result was puzzling—rather it was un-puzzling. Even so brief a familiarity with the supposed dangerous curves seemed completely to shake the danger out of them, and we found ourselves possessed of a confidence which at once assumed a patronizing and contemptuous air towards our uncertain feelings of an hour before. Our changed attitude made it suddenly easy, too, to account for the indulgent grins of the "oldest inhabitants" at the tender motorist's show of fear of their native trails. It may also account for the flippancy with which some writers treat what were doubtless to them, at first, grave perils of the road. A record of our second impressions would certainly be much milder and *safer* than herein described. Nevertheless the truth of our story must remain in a correct interpretation of the

mental processes of the gasoline-propelled adventurer cutting his touring teeth.

From Fernie to Cranbrook is sixty miles of practically perfect roads, the latter half mostly on the flat in the valley of the Kootenay River.

Although one feels inspired and excited while in the eternal shadows that overcast a town crammed into the crotch of colossal mountains, one wearies of being inspired and excited for life. So there comes along the more peaceful, pastoral city of Cranbrook, whose forest industries must eventually recede before the lusty farmer.

It is only a breathing spell, however, for we pass on into a country as wild and nerve-trying as any yet. Around Moyie Lake the road was particularly uncomfortable. It is built on the principle of an endless nightmare, the sort in which you endure all the eye-blinkings and stomach-swallowings of disaster without the reward of being put out of your misery. High above the lake the road curves around a steep mountain on heavy grades where for long stretches there are no turning-out places. The bogie of meeting another car keeps clutching your throat like an evil spirit. The road ahead looks like an irregular oblique knife-cut on the side of a huge round cheese, and either the other fellow must back down that narrow cut, or you must back uphill with about eighteen inches leeway of your back wheels.\*

Beyond Moyie Lake our road became involved in a sort of family quarrel. The pass has narrowed and

\*This road has since been re-located.

narrowed until the railway and the river come to grips for possession of the remaining few feet. As the rank newcomer, the highway is regarded very much as an outsider, and meets the customary fate of an interferer in the domestic affairs of old-timers. When the converging mountains call for a real showdown, the creek angrily drives the steam horse snorting into the cliff, scornfully flinging the wretched highway far up the side or back and around the shoulder of some stubborn giant. Time and time again our path threaded its way high above the tracks, tumbling again when space permitted. Many were our sighs of relief at failing to meet a vehicle on those single-track flights.

Even on a bad day you can generally depend on the god of humor smiling at least once, and planting the seed of a laugh which will mature sooner or later. In mid-afternoon we met a large Idaho car and both of us saluted after the language of the country. "How are the roads ahead?" Considering the visibly nervous condition of the passengers we merely mentioned that there were one or two narrow turns to be encountered on the hills behind us.

"'One or two!' Great Scott! Wait till you see what you've got to go over where we've come from. Our car wouldn't take the turns at all without backing a couple of times. Why, man alive!—well, we'd better not discourage you."

At this late date we were not so easily discouraged, and in fact it turned out that we were at that particular moment practically over and past any-

thing that might reasonably be called a hazard. We have been wondering amusedly every since, as to what must have been the feelings of our easily-frightened friends after they left us.

On the whole, the end of the day was a notably depressing one. For lack of accommodation in either direction we stopped for the night on the Idaho frontier at the joint customs-house hamlets of Kingsgate, B.C., and Eastport, Idaho. Here we found a population of some thirty souls sizzling at the bottom of a deep, narrow gut in the mountains, so placed that it admitted the full glare of the sun without a trace of breeze. From one side of this close-packed world to the other, a couple of hundred yards, the international boundary is marked by a very high wire fence, and strict international scrutiny governs everybody and everything that penetrates its tough mesh. The one tidy lodging-house seems to exist on frontier complications. Amongst our five fellow-lodgers there was a deaf and dumb girl, accompanied by a guardian, but to whom the United States immigration authorities refused admission until the arrival of telegrams establishing that she would not be a charge on that country. Another was a Yankee motor mechanic summoned to a customer's wrecked car in the British Columbia mountains, but held up by the Canadian alien labor law. Then there were two questionable-looking individuals whose faces were their fortunes so far as international credentials went, and as their faces indicated a complete bankruptcy

of good intentions, the wire fence opened not for them.

They let us through. But we were hot, terribly, inescapably, hot down there, close to the bowels of the earth, and further disheartened to learn that the Idaho roads ahead were unspeakably poor and rough. Above all, it exasperated us to realize that we had now been obliged to turn aside from our direct homeward path and were entering on the long detour—a detour that would take us over two hundred miles south of the border—made necessary by our own British Columbia government's failure to open up by a paltry hundred miles of roads, a direct all-Canadian path from Winnipeg to Vancouver.\*

We were tired—tired since early morning by five score miles of strange, hazardous roads, tired of the bumping of our poor-riding car, tired of scenery and mountains, tired for the moment of the whole thing.

The Skipper had an acute, tearful attack of her standard complaint of no-telegramitis—and perhaps I had caught it from her. To say we were almost tired of hoping is another way of admitting homesickness. We had been unable lately to get any direct word from Vancouver, and we were still separated by over six hundred miles of doubt from that dirty little face we longed to see flattened against the window pane for our return.

\*These roads are now to be built. 1922.

## CHAPTER XXV

### "FIVE DOLLARS OR TEN DAYS!"

About this point in our pilgrim's progress, puffy of body and jingle-brained from the clatter of greasy hotels, we yearned—and yawned—again for the hospitality and peace of a private house. Pausing a minute before a trim mansion, we telepathed absent treatment to the inmates through two hundred feet of the cool, clear evening light. We had discovered a sinister, double-barrelled effectiveness in thus timing our raids beyond the evening meal-hour. It at once disposed of the problem of dining us and it found the full-stomached head of the house in placid and obliging humor.

Nevertheless, as I ingratiatingly mounted the verandah steps that evening, there was an atmospheric pressure which told me that I had made a mistake. The luxury of well-cared-for upholstery, the restful harmony of the partly-seen hall and dining room, the profusion of periodicals and music, even the peculiar tone in the echoes of juvenile laughter, betokened at once the probable horror with which the proprietors would regard anything even mildly suggestive of "taking in boarders." Just around the corner of the broad verandah was a twenty-year-old

girl dressed unmistakably to receive the shiny-haired youth who sat uncomfortably on the railing as he looked love, side glanced at a convenient hammock and prayed for darkness. To have said "lodgers" in that quarter would have been so extremely embarrassing as to be called sacrilege.

As if to round out the conspiracy of circumstances against our chances, I found myself face to face with a personage that made me think of a setting mandarin duck. A pompous old lady whose clothes overflowed a very large chair, seemed to have been left as watch dog at the castle gate with little to do but glare and wield her walking stick, which she did after the manner of a sceptre. Her mouth expression was halfway between that of a rat trap and a disappointed trout. She was, in fact, the only forbidding thing about the inviting premises. For an instant I intended merely to enquire the road to Spokane and crawlfish down the garden walk. Then came the obvious, but probably hopeless, impulse to demand the whereabouts of the master of the house. As one silly idea promised to be as useless as the other, I allowed myself to accept the inspired impulse to make my appeal directly to the determined and wilful-looking old lady. At least she did not look like the person to keep one waiting.

"Yes, it can be made quite convenient," she snapped, with no good humor, but a decided finality. "I'll call my daughter-in-law." The sceptre thumped the verandah irritably and a most attractive woman, about the Skipper's age, came singing along the hall.

"Amy, I've just told this gentleman that you will put him and his wife up for the night."

"Oh, Grandma!" was all Amy involuntarily exclaimed for a moment. Then her well-bred features relaxed, and she smilingly bobbed up to the occasion. Eagerly glancing towards the road she asked sweetly, "Is that your wife?" in a tone which made me wish she might be the Skipper's sister. "I'll go right along and speak to her."

Assuredly fortune favored the faithless. Nothing sent from heaven could so completely have established my innocence of the charge of coercing our hosts into becoming our hosts. In my primal nature I am what the Skipper calls "Devoid of fine feeling." Many times on this jaunt she disgustedly made the accusation, and as frequently I uncomplainingly submitted—flattered. I had no objection, as a rule, to her discovering, to-morrow, that I had been "devoid" to-day, but had I been obliged to go back to that car alone it is extremely likely that her embarrassing questions would have resulted in my being caught in the act. My "devoid-edness" won for us many a delightful hour in those days, though of late my critical partner had become more difficult to convince. On this occasion I was genuinely sorry for Mrs. Amy and the household autocrated by Grandma, but I felt sure that, like other disagreeable things of life, they would be thankful for it in the end.

"Amy!" called grandma imperiously, as we were halfway into the house; "give them your sister's room. That little one won't do."

Imploringly the Skipper insisted that the little room was the only one we would be at home in, and made it known quite positively that we would have nobody moved for us. Grandma's mouth worked threateningly while she dragged her stick across the floor once or twice, suggestive of the growling of a dog deprived of a bone, but she sullenly agreed. She liked interference from strangers quite as little as from relations, but to have had us withdraw just then would have been losing the chance to impose her will on the family.

One of the two bonny children was of the same age and haircut as our own. While the Skipper gathered this little girl in her arms I noticed the wet glisten in her eyes reflected in those of the other mother, and knew that my faith in developments had been justified.

"Do you know," whispered the sharer of my secrets, in the little room a minute or two later, "I believe that old woman runs this whole house."

"What makes you think that?" unconcernedly. "They said she is only visiting for a month."

"'One month of hard labor' for Mrs.—"

"Mrs. Amy," I offered.

"Look here!" turning suspiciously, "Tell me, was it Mrs. Amy who said they could have us—or was it the grandmother?"

"Now don't worry," with unblushing assurance. "Mrs. Amy invited us almost before I could say a word." Although I did not choose to look up from my diligent nail-filing, I could feel a familiar, uncom-

fortable gaze upon my side-face. Whistling softly to myself, I watched the Skipper staring profoundly at nothing for a full half-minute. My shifty look returned to the manicuring operation just quickly enough to dodge an eye-dagger she shot at me at the end of her cogitating and which meant that, knave or fool, I was equally guilty. After looking, crestfallen, out of the window a minute, she resignedly suggested that we go downstairs.

"Bring the visitors out here," ordered the sceptrewielder. "I want to talk to them about their trip. Tell Caroline and that young man to come too. What do they want sitting around there by themselves?"

As the young people joined us, eager as a brace of fowls dragged up to be decapitated, I was vexed in my mind for the Skipper, who is particularly sensitive about any disturbance to the smooth-running of the course of true love. Incidentally, too, I was afraid that she would be unreasonable enough to blame me for any annoyance caused these people.

"Mother has to go to bed at nine," remarked Mrs. Amy. Unconsciously the Skipper sneaked a quick look at her watch, which the hostess smilingly observed. The two women exchanged an understanding glance, and I felt better. I felt as though six lashes had been taken from my sentence.

"Good night," snarled Grandma, as she hobbled indoors. "Don't let those children make any noise before I'm up. Remember I've got to be taken to the dressmaker's at eleven. And, Amy! I don't want

you and James talking over any more plans till I've heard about them."

"I wonder if you'd walk down as far as the stone bridge with us?" asked the Skipper, next minute, anxious to clear her conscience about Caroline and the young man. She was too much worried and too desperately tired to have suggested a walk from choice.

As we reached the gate we met Mrs. Amy's husband, who politely turned back to walk with me. Soon the conversation of the pair ahead became confidential, then fell to mysterious whisperings followed by peals of laughter. The stone bridge, the fatigue of the day and all embarrassment were alike forgotten. The fact that the Skipper had never known another such mother-in-law did not seem to prevent her appreciating grandma. In fact the vagaries of that worthy personage were so patent that nobody tried to avoid them. Even the man by my side, though he talked good-naturedly of other things, grinned every now and then in quiet understanding.

"It appears grandma divides her time equally between her children," I was told after we had retired, "and considers she is doing a tremendous favor here by giving them an extra week."

Oddly as it may sound, there was about grandma a peculiar, knowing glance that suggested a sense of humor. Partly because the Skipper poo-hooed my idea I resolved, at breakfast, to find out. It was not easy, but I offered her the bait of one or two sup-

posedly funny stories of my own, and this is the mackerel my sprat caught:

"We had a real exciting court trial down in Danielsville some years back. George Alexander's boy and Lem Samson and some of their tough friends raised a public disturbance at a concert, and the town council had them summonsed. Judge Mellusha wanted to conduct it right and proper, but young Alexander and Lem had told the folks they were going to have some fun with him. We reckoned the whole fuss a disgrace, but we all went up there on court day to see what'd happen.

"When all the evidence was given about Lem, the Judge looked at him solemnly and wise-like over his glasses, and said, 'Young man, I'll have to sentence you to twenty dollars fine—'

"'That's all right, old sport,' Lem cut him off sort o' sneery, 'I've got that much right here in my pants pocket—'

"'—and ten days in gaol! Have you got that right there in your pants pocket, young man?'

"When young Alexander came up we thought he'd had a lesson, but he kept talking back at the town's lawyer, and I saw old Mellusha clap a sharp eye on him. Of course the Judge knew all the boy's folks.

"'How did you get into this mess, boy?' he asked young Alexander, as though he might be looking for an excuse to let him off. But the lad never appreciated it.

"'Aw! I slid in on a plank,' he hissed, and everybody got to tittering.

"‘Very well,’ snapped Mellusha, taking up his pen and starting to write, ‘I’ll give you two weeks—to get the splinters out!’ ”

I heartily congratulated grandma and assured her that her children must find her very entertaining if all her stories were like this one.

"Well, I do my best for ‘em all," she said severely, "I give each one all the time I can spare." She took up her sceptre to go, afraid, I think, that she had wasted too much time being agreeable. "And they’re mostly grumbling at that." Her son James smiled at this. "My youngest son, Bert, writes me that I might spend a fortnight with them this fall, but I just won’t do it. I’ll give him ten days."

This last dire sentence sounded amusingly reminiscent of Judge Mellusha’s court.

"‘Five dollars or ten days!’ " mused the Skipper, as we rolled down the driveway. Then she turned and prepared to deal with my case—in the Supreme Court.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### BITING IDAHO DUST

The motor tour remembered only by perfect roads and perfect luck will not be remembered very long or very livingly. The one thing about a really good time that you can be sure of is that it will not last. Only dead people stay permanently down and only chronic optimists are permanently up; most of us have a bread-and-milk even tenor of our way to which we pendulate.

I once knew a man subject to the "blues." He had several fits of depression a year, but he developed the odd faculty of being able to postpone them till a convenient season. It took the Skipper and me a long time to learn this lesson. At first we erred in going out to meet a bad time at a bad hour. Depression of body and depression of mind coming together lower the thermometer near to the quitting point. Your ambition, caught by this combination, is liable to get frozen.

Just what the jaded motorist would get on those shocking roads of northern Idaho is an unsolved mystery; even the early bird gets the glooms. The first ten miles was a floor of loose cannon balls, the

second ten miles a deep feather bed of dust and the third ten miles a combination of cannon balls in a feather bed. The modern art of making a new car secondhand was born on this road.

Bonner's Ferry and Sandpoint are both fine-looking towns, or would be if you could pick them out of the clouds of Idaho dust. The peculiarities of Idaho dust are that it rises, but never falls; that it blows, but never blows away, and that, no matter how much of it you eat, the supply remains unimpaired. It is both a pall and appalling. Ten cars approaching in a string will look just like one car, the first one being all that is visible. No pillar of fire by night could penetrate that saturated solution of aerial mud. On the other hand, if you happen to be driving before the wind, you can easily imagine yourself the children of Israel, led (and followed!) by the pillar of cloud by day.

But, as I have hinted, the Skipper and I took all these hurdles early in the morning when our resisting powers were young and strong.

Bonner's Ferry is what Lord Fauntleroy might call "of ancient lineage." From about 1860 to 1885 it was the point of debarkation on the broad Kootenay (spelled Kootenai on Idaho maps) for settlers even as far as Alberta and Saskatchewan. At Sandpoint we crossed an arm of Pend Oreille Lake on a wooden bridge about two miles long. Far on our left were the Bitter Root Mountains, chief hazard of the United States transcontinentals, the Yellowstone Trail and the National Parks Highway.

Sandpoint is the terminus of one of three alternate crossings of the National Parks Highway, gridironing the Bitter Roots. The idea of the road association in adopting all three routes is presumably because two of them are likely to be impassable. Tourists complained very much of the poor road conditions in Montana, as well as the waterless, vegetationless nature of the country, and were very interested to learn of the cool, well-watered route by which we had crossed the Continent.

While in the matter of such trimmings as road-signs, guide-books and advertising, "The King's International Highway" is without doubt behindhand, the natural and geographical advantages of the northern or Canadian transcontinental are so obvious and great as almost to make comparison absurd. And the Yellowstone Trail is probably the best United States transcontinental at that.

The narrow slit in the mountains at Kingsgate widened as we went south until we were in a broad, fertile valley whose boundaries were out of sight. Correspondingly, that desperate old sinner of a road mended his ways and went on mending them until, coming right out into the open he "testified" that he had reformed, and of course we all lived happily ever afterwards. In short the last five hundred and fifty miles of our run into the magnificent sunset city of Vancouver, was, with trifling exceptions, over perfect roads.

While having our lunch that day—the banquet being spread on the running-board as the only place

in sight capable of being dusted—I occupied the time studying our tires. On a long tour good tires are about as essential as good health, and, like good health, are seldom valued until they are not there. Probable tire expense had loomed large in my estimates, as every long-distance driver I met reported punctured pocketbooks. In England, “tyres,” in the process of burning up the road, are themselves burned by contact with the smooth roadways, but in America we chop them up, run them flat or break their backs—all in cold blood. No matter how gentle your resolutions, your tires are going to have a ghastly time of it from Atlantic to Pacific. I understand that scientific tests show, under certain road conditions, that the shock of a tire is equal to a blow of twenty tons. Yet I have seen motorists pretend to test the resistance of a casing (or “shoe”) by pressing their thumbs into it.

In selecting the brand of tire, therefore, for so gruelling a test, unknown makes should be avoided. If you buy tires that cannot afford to be bad you have hitched your wagon to a star, or, to be strictly correct, stars to your wagon. Remember this. It is the kernel in the nut, the butter on the bread of tire selection. Even the tires that come on a new car may not be good enough. “That’s one you got with the car!” is often the scornful garage-man’s death sentence on a casing cut off by ill health in the prime of life. Before leaving Montreal I got new tubes and heavy-tread tires all round and two spares. These new shoes and stockings I treated kindly, preserving

their complexion from bright sunshine whenever possible and blowing them to a feed of fresh air every Saturday night to maintain their spirits at concert pitch. The result in my case I am almost—but not quite—too modest to state. In the record run of 3,370 miles, plus mileage expense of losing the trail (which we did nearly every day) and side trips, 3,840 miles in all, we experienced not a single puncture. We had a front casing and tube smashed in the collision, but otherwise I got home on the same air I started with. If we established no other record I think probably we have one in this.

Spokane proved a very delightful and progressive city, with a hotel so perfect in its equipment and service that it has attracted almost world-wide prominence.

From there we did a right wheel and once more faced the setting sun. "Now," smiled the Skipper victoriously, "let us watch your sarcastic visage turn Barbary brown, for a change."

"Oh, I think the Prairies did me to a turn," I said.

"Yes, probably! But I couldn't enjoy it properly then."

The thusness of this conversation arose from the fact that, while travelling south from Cranbrook, the Skipper had been for the first time on the sunny side of the car which had disagreed horribly with her complexion, her comfort and her temper. The point

is one worth remembering when the prospective trans-continental tourist is deciding whether to tour east or west. Very few will want to play shuttle-cock at this game, so the advantages of one direction over the other had better be weighed.

From west to east apparently has the advantage of wind and sun, the prevailing wind being west and the centre of the driving hours nearer to sunset than sunrise. While the head-on glare of a western sun is a decided discomfort, it may be largely mitigated by yellow glasses, and a storm visor added to the regular windshield and painted green. A head wind, too, in my experience is an advantage rather than otherwise. It not only affords coolness to the passengers, but to the engine as well. Travelling due east over the fast roads of Pennsylvania in May, it was necessary to empty the boiling water from the radiator several times a day.

If you have a mind to save the best till the last your taste in scenery must decide, because there is little to choose in the matter of roads. On most routes the good roads are at the ends and the bad ones in the middle, except possibly our own, where the very worst roads were comparatively close to Montreal. I found that there are more good roads in the west than in the east, sparseness of the population notwithstanding.

The location of your home will have a bearing on your plans also. It seems to be common to our creature instinct to do one's striving in a homeward direction. (Do you remember how much better the old mare used to strive in a homeward direction).

Then there is the consideration already mentioned. All cars are now left-hand drive. Journeying eastward the occupant of the right-hand seat, presumably the female of the species, is exposed to the rays of the sun slanting from the south (in summer of course). No matter how much you profess to admire her beefy brown complexion, your wife will remember that they are not worn that way, and you will have a fretting passenger at your ear.

The deciding factor for poor folk, will be the financial aspect. Had we driven from Pacific to Atlantic we should have paid more for the car in the first place and then a freight charge to have it shipped back home. By purchasing at the factory and driving west we, so to speak, "got" the railways coming and going. And, lastly, you may wish to combine business with romance. If romance, secret or expressed, does not enter into your transcontinental-ing you are in a sense cracking the nut to throw away the kernel. Admittedly it is more romantic to tread in the footprints of explorers and prairie-schoonerites than those of a prosperous western grocer "going back East to see the folks again." Motoring across America to discover Montreal suggests adventuring backwards.

## CHAPTER XXVII

### TWO JUMPS FROM HOME

Evening and the Columbia! The words will always suggest a throb of exhilaration and triumph—or at any rate something just the opposite to our feelings in Kingsgate two nights before.

All day long we had been eating up distance—and dust—through the parched veldt and the sorrowfully-withered fruitlands of “The Inland Empire” of Washington State. The Skipper referred to it as “The Empire on which the Dust Never Sets.” At the end a grey, monstrous gulch opened before us with the swift, turbid Columbia sluicing out an ever-deeper channel in the nether distance, with the pigmy buildings of Vantage Ferry a mile or two away. (The cliffs must have been more than six hundred feet above the water.) We watched some stray horses go down and they looked smaller than ants. Then the cliffs seemed to split apart and a mere thread of light showed where the road glided down and down, just a scratch on the sides of huge, round point after point.

It was a magnificent road, smooth, some twenty-five feet wide and five per cent. grade hewn out of the solid rock. Our speedometer registered one hundred and eight-five miles for the day; we were numb

with tiredness and my nerves quivered from hours of swift driving.

"Heavenly Nellie!" the Skipper sighed ponderously in wide-eyed fright as she looked into the huge depths. "Is there no other way at all?"

We could just catch glimpses of two or three cars winding up, but could form no idea as to when we should pass them. Rounding a bluff, the full flash of a horizontal sun caught us squarely in the eyes, and, as for guiding, I was as helpless for a minute as though it had been pitch dark. The right-hand side was the outside, but, bidding our horn do its shriekiest, we crept around that point on hands and knees so to speak, but hanging tight to the in-side.

This little scare and the exhilaration of the cliffs acted on us like a reviving cocktail. The ferry deck was blown cool by the everlasting wind-sweep through the gorge, and by the time we entered the little inn on the western shore our spirits were perching on the top rung of hope.

Divested of everything the blue laws allowed, we strolled the twilight hour amongst the parties of camping motorists. How, in the name of all that is grotesquely funny and fascinatingly human, these parties could have been so stand-offishly unobservant of one another was then, and has always remained, beyond our simple minds.

There was the honeymoon couple from Oregon, who at first rather told us to go away, but at last almost refused to allow us to go. There was a Berkley student camping it with his mother. He was nineteen

and so acted. At dish-washing and packing-up times he was away seeing "how about any girls around," or he was away just on first principles. His mother remarked to the Skipper, "It's mostly work, this camping." "Anything is," said the Skipper comprehendingly, "when you have to do it all alone."

We also met a woman from a near-by town whom the landlady told in some way that I was a writer—that is, that I was writing. She implored me to get irrigation for the whole State. A writer was to her as influential and mysterious a being as the Emperor of China. Whether he had written personals for *The Hop's Crossing Weekly* or Shakespeare's poems she wist not nor wot not.

"Blink" and "the woman" personified elemental toughness absolutely unspoiled by the slightest thought of dissembling it. "Blink, here," she boasted grandly, "'s stabled for Steffens ever since 'fore we wuz married. Eh, Blink?" But Blink's expression indicated that he was above getting into a discussion with mere women. He was gulping a whole pie at the moment, when he happened to feel something itch in his thick hair. While he pushed a handful of custard into his mouth with his left, he vigorously attacked the itch with the fork held in his right. Then, dropping the fork and seizing the tin plate, he cleaned it with his face, afterwards tossing it into the dish-pan and unsmilingly licking the sweet off his nose and cheeks and chin while he slapped his pockets one after the other for his plug.

"Have a chaw, mister," he invited, handing me the wet end, but the Skipper here remembered suddenly that we had to go at once. "I'll walk as fer as the landin' with you," said "the woman." "I want a pail of water anyway."

"Mag!" her husband called her back angrily, then in a subdued voice, "drop that pail. You know damn well what I told you. This is your outin' and I'm doin' all the housework."

I suppose it is the "devoid-ness of fine feeling" in me, but I enjoyed Blink and "the woman" more than any of them, although the Skipper's favorites were "The hen party."

History may boast larger families than the hen party, but never a larger one living in one small automobile. They had built a huge prairie-schooner top on a light delivery truck and when we arrived the makings of a veritable colony of pots and lean-tos had been produced, and the family—I'm sure there were nine children—were settling for the night.

"How do they all manage to sleep in the wagon?" I stupidly asked. ..

"Sleep in the wagon?" exclaimed the mother, "None of them does except me and the baby. As many of them as can get room sleeps under it."

Every creature of them seemed to have his or her special task and did it, noisily but effectually. One little man of five was throwing straw into a large barrel he had tumbled out.

"Going to make Rover a nice bed?" I asked.

"Huh!" he grunted, hurt at my ignorance, "that ain't the dog's. It's fer me and Tim."

Amongst other knick-knacks they carried a cage of hens for the sake of the egg supply and presumably to give a homelike atmosphere wherever they camped. "Wonder if they carry a grandfather clock to get the time?" whispered the Skipper.

"How do you get that engine to pull you on those long hills?" I asked the father.

"She don't do it," he replied decidedly. "Them biggest boys has to shove. Guess we'll have a tough time to-morrow morning. But we don't bother traveling more than fourteen or fifteen miles a day."

The perpetual "swish-swish" of the 'Columbia's torrent against the rocks and the distant musical calls of the ferrymen fell pleasantly on our ears as we walked back to the inn, the all-pervading black hills seeming near in the darkness.

"Two jumps more and we'll be home," I whispered joyfully.

"Don't say it if you're not sure we can do it," trembled the Skipper.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### THE PACIFIC AT LAST.

"I think that I shall never see  
A poem as lovely as a tree:  
A tree whose hungry mouth is pressed  
Against the earth's wide-flowing breast;  
A tree that looks at God all day,  
And lifts her leafy arms to pray;  
Upon whose bosom snow has lain,  
Who intimately lives with rain.

"Poems are made by fools like me,  
But only God can make a tree."

Between nine and ten next morning we urged our steed, with panting sides, uphill for about two hours! We could make it on high—only just. Another car came panting behind us and for miles neither of us could gain a yard on the other. Out of that great valley of rock, arid and burning hot save for the deep-set Columbia, we emerged again to cactus-lands of desolate expanse. For two hundred miles altogether we travelled a barren wilderness of soil reputed wonderfully rich, but lacking irrigation. Two or three mountain streams trickled through the land at wide intervals, creating in their path a vivid streak of green that flowed with milk and honey.

People who live amongst the exquisite green of plant life do not realize how exquisite and green it

is. But when, after wearying your smarting eyes hopelessly for hours—for ever it seems—on the hot expanse of dead, colorless brown, no tree, no flower, no blade of grass, no drop of water; then suddenly to top a knoll and stop agape with blinking, fascinated gaze at the near sight of tall, quivering poplars, vivid like Noah's Ark trees, rising from fields of waving emerald and gold, and divided by a placid stream—ah! It is then you awake to the goodness of nature, the glory of green, budding life.

Once, in the Grand Canyon of the Colorado, at 125 Fahrenheit, I spent a terrible day on stagnant water and no water. Back on the Canyon's rim, I asked for a glass of ice water, but the galvanic jolt to my body was so great that I was certain some practical joke had been played on me; though it was just pure water. Here, now, on the leafless waste of the inland empire, when first we caught sight of gay, upstanding trees, we actually turned to one another questioning looks as to why such an artificial thing was placed there. But it was only a green tree; though, ever since, the sight of a full-blown, leafy maple has inspired me with gratitude to the Maker thereof.

The town of Ellensburg, sentinelled by the easternmost of the Cascade Mountains, though surrounded on all sides by gaunt, dead hills, is the populous, prosperous centre of fifteen thousand acres of the land of Canaan. There is the joyous sight of water gushing everywhere; fat, contented cattle wallow in it, the fountained park sparkles with it, the roadside ditches brim with it, and everywhere the glad earth brings

forth its increase. An oasis is not so much a thing of beauty as it is an ecstatic shock of beauty.

The day we saw our first jack-rabbit was one of the few occasions when the Skipper provided me with a really good joke—one worth preserving in alcohol. This elusive animal, though unlike any one you have ever seen, is still somehow like several. My wife evidenced the most agitated and motherly concern over it and wanted me to take it into the car.

"It's a special breed of cat or something that's got lost," she exclaimed. "It's sure to be somebody's pet. Some little girl will be crying for it. Do get out and see if you can't coax it in, then we can enquire at the next house."

I confess I did not know a jack-rabbit myself, but when I saw this gentleman's sprinting ability I did not quite fancy myself pursuing him across the inland empire on a hot July afternoon. The horror at my heartless attitude was slightly mellowed after the next two hours, during which we saw about twenty-five thousand of these "special cats," not including the two hundred-odd corpses of those who had been hypnotized at night by non-glare lenses.

I have been forbidden, long since, to utter the word "jack-rabbit" but sometimes on our drives even to this day, in a daring moment, I whistle kindly to the hurrying hindquarters of a vanishing hare and coax in a gentle voice, "Here pussy! Poor pussy! Come and I'll take you home."

All of the morning out from Vantage Ferry we had watched the silver-tipped Cascade range draw closer,

and at Cle Elum commenced in earnest our climb of the Snoqualmie Pass. This section, called "A Boulevard Drive Across the Cascades," is probably the most magnificent piece of mountain road-work in America. On a maximum grade of eight per cent. the hard, wide and well-made road curves and doubles on itself amid a perfect Eden of surprises; here a hotel, now a beautiful lake, and then, before you could have believed it, the flat, brief summit.

Though of course far short of the enthralling, limitless panorama of the high Rockies, the Snoqualmie Pass route is not only a thing of beauty, but promises to be a joy for ever, by reason of the latest resolve of the ultra up-to-date State of Washington to maintain it free from snow all winter. Most mountain passes are only a joy for four or five months, and whereas the very term "Pass" on the motor-map usually raises pin-feathers on the timid driver, the Snoqualmie Pass is just about as full of hazards as a pass-pantry.

The Pacific slope of the Pass is even more beautiful. It leaves the summit by a sort of multiple "S" faggot-stitching the mountain side, and then slants away on a dead straight line through a lordly forest of Douglas firs or Oregon pine. Being from one hundred to two hundred feet high, these wonderful trees dwarf the generous width of the road until the motorist seems to see nothing but forest and a great crack of light splitting the roof. The surface of the road, narrowed by distance, shimmers in a light almost ethereal, as the sun's rays deflect from the furry sides of that leafy canyon. A mile or more ahead we could see two or

three motor cars gliding soundlessly down. They looked like so many buttons rolling on the carpet in the aisle of a vast cathedral. At some points the Pass became very narrow and threatening in its cliffs and chasms. Through an opening in the forest we watched a freight train being pulled slowly along an unbroken line of tunnels and trestles at a dizzy height.

So enthralled was I and unobservant of the roadway that we banged into a deep hole under repair. The wheel suddenly jerked in my hands. I bit my tongue and then bounced until my bare head bulged out the car top. Coming down, my nose evidently hooked over one of the cloth straps, and left me nursing my face and squealing with pain. As a youth (and as a bean I may say) I considered myself quite a dab at changing the subject, which talent I often exercised if the jesting turned against me. But wives, I find, are crudely unappreciative of this particular dexterity in their husbands. During the rest of that morning the Skipper, instead of responding to my versatile conversation and meeting my eyes frankly, wore a mask of exasperating amusement and kept staring in a pre-occupied way at the cut under my nose. On one or two occasions she even interrupted my instructive remarks on the flora of the region, by unprovoked outbursts of laughter. I was the more anxious to dispose of the incident by reason of past remarks of this woman that my nose looks like those of the ladies of the middle ages who rode on broomsticks. I insisted that there was nothing to laugh at, and she smilingly retorted that neither was there anything to get mad at, and

we were like to have emulated Brutus and Cassius, when the fortunes of the trail once more knit us together in harmony.

A few miles above North Bend we came to a point which marked the former limit of our holiday trippings out from Vancouver. This may not sound to the reader like any kind of event, but it was, for all that. When you have been wandering for months amongst scenes unhomelike, if ever so wonderful, and have driven for five thousand miles, as we had, every foot of it over strange roads, and your objective ever since you started has been home—well—your first sight of home is going to be a thriller. And the first familiar something or remembered turn in the long, long path, is really that first glimpse of home.

A few generations ago, when we were all untutored savages, the only map we trusted was the map in our own memory; and even to-day the lineal descendent of that spirit of primitive self-dependence whispers to our brain a degree of suspense, of misbelief, while travelling a trail we do not know. Once on a familiar road the rest of the journey is quite another story.

Past the high Snoqualamie Falls we slipped along, always down hill, to Kirkland, the western ferry entrance to Seattle. As we looked across the calm waters of Lake Washington, to where the smoke overhung the busy city, and realized that only its steep hills lay between us and the surface of the ultimate Pacific, we felt another sort of home thrill.

To the north from Kirkland we started on the last 160-mile leg of our journey over the matchless Pacific

Highway, the most highly improved long-distance road in the world. On the wings of hope and asphalt we sped until benighted in a hamlet called Big Lake. "No hotel here!" "Good!" we muttered, and within fifteen minutes were ensconced in one of those ivy-grown, child-ruled houses of refuge that had made life and digestion so easy. This, the last of our foster homes, was picturesquely and traditionally perfect, even to the seven-foot ceilings, the spiral rag carpets, the framed wreath and the crayon portrait.

Late in the evening the Skipper and I walked happily up the peaceful road. Around us were the sweet-toned, regular callings of the night birds and the hum of insects, while from far across the lake came the twinkling lights of a lumber-mill, and the friendly, intermittent droning of the buzz-saw. Tireless and sleepless we were that last night. Out of old hopes had come hearts that were suddenly very young. We felt in sympathy with all the world and thankful enough that dangers and discomforts were past and that, there ahead, a mere ninety miles—so ridiculously close that we could almost reach out and touch it—was the end of the rainbow. Already we could see, there by the gently lapping tide, the pot of gold—our little grey home in the west.

## CHAPTER XXIX

### WHERE THE SUN SETS

Vancouver (BLISS CARMAN, Aug. 1922.)

Where the long steel roads run and stop  
And the panting engines come to rest,  
Where the streets go down to the arms of the sea  
Stands the metropolis of the West.

There the adventurous ships come in  
With spices and silks of the East in hold,  
And coastwise liners down from the North  
With tonnage of furs and gold.

Traders up from the coral isles  
With tales of those lotus-eating lands  
And smiling men from the Orient  
With idols of jade in their hands.

Yellow and red and white and brown  
With stories in many an outland tongue,  
They mingle and jest in her welcoming streets  
As they did when Troy was young.

Tyre and Sidon,—where are they?  
Where is the trade of Carthage now?  
Here in Vancouver on English Bay  
With to-morrow's light on her brow!

The northerly four hundred miles of the Pacific highway, from Portland, Oregon, has spun its ribbon of pavement at first through a fairly flat country entirely inland, then for two hundred and fifty miles by the shores of Puget Sound and the Gulf of Georgia,

whose tidal waters here and there touch the road. Here, too, the mountains are found steadily and menacingly approaching the coast line as the British Columbia border is neared. First Mount Rainier, sixty miles to the right, lifts its sublime crest 14,000 feet; then, just south of the boundary, the eternal snow cone of Baker is seen just half that distance to the east.

At Blaine, on the spot where the frontier touches the Pacific, stands the great international Peace Portal, said to be the only monument ever erected in commemoration of peace. This gigantic arch is studded by a thousand electric globes and is as beautiful by night as by day.

Rising on a long, steep hill from the border, we found ourselves looking down on the haven of our hopes, the wide fruitful valley of the Fraser, the farther limit of which was indicated by the imposing line of snowy mountains east to west across the horizon from the Rockies to the sea. Like a challenge from the primeval this suddenly-appearing array seems to speak in wordless eloquence, "Thus far but no farther!" And there, away off in the left-hand corner of this living map, where the river empties and where ocean and mountain meet, lay the great, busy seaport of the north Pacific—and our baby!

Confronted with this solid wall of the Coast Range, the motorist knows that, willy-nilly, his journey is over, for beyond the valley of the turbulent silt-bearing Fraser the Indian cayuse and the pack-laden prospector alone tread the mountain trails and the sound of the motor horn is unknown in the land. A good

road skirts the inner shore of Vancouver Island, but the construction of motor highways on the coast of the mainland, north of Greater Vancouver, is to all intents and purposes impossible.

This is no doubt partly what gives to Vancouver the charm which so stirs the imagination of all who visit it, for no place on earth (except possibly Suez) seems so distinctly to divide the East from the West, the North from the South, and to mark the cleavage between Orient and Occident, savage and civilized, the primeval and the cultured, mountain and plain, land and sea.

It is characteristic of the place that probably not a dozen of its inhabitants have ever explored even as far as the jungle mysteries of its own Stanley Park.

As we viewed Vancouver anew on that well-remembered twenty-eighth of July, from one of its stately hills, we easily allowed its claim to be the most romantically-placed city of North America. Its leafy peninsulas and lofty promontories, its park, like a great green pin-cushion on the mirror of the harbor, those long hillsides of residences, and deep, broad valleys of homes, the great office buildings, the ships, and the bewildering array of overshadowing mountains—all appeared at that moment of sunshine and shadow, like ornaments laid on the sheet of smooth, blue glass that was the face of the all-pervading Pacific.

In its streets the shawl and feathers of the aborigine pass in the crowd beside the turban and the queue. The dark-visaged miner and the horny-handed logger rub elbows with the sailor, the seasoned globe-trotter

or the foreign diplomat; for all who travel the great trade arteries must stay at least for a time. There is no such thing as "passing through" Vancouver.

All of these things and every curve and kink of that ninety miles leading to them were as familiar to us as the buttons on our coats, but none of them was the familiar thing we sought. Somewhere on the busy streets of New Westminster we had missed the party of welcome sent out by the Automobile Club to meet us, and now, unworthily postponing our obligations in that direction until another time, we drove with ill-concealed anxiety to that door which we knew would quickly fly open and reveal the object of our quest.

As I stood quietly by, watching my wife holding out her arms, a little figure surveyed us doubtfully from the top step. Then in shrill disappointment commanded, "That's not my daddy in that dirty old coat!" With a peal of laughter that was also a very tearful cry, the Skipper gathered up the irate wee woman in her arms, thus opening for her the flood-gates of memory and emotion. Then, with streaming face, "Oh! Mummy, Mummy, dear, I thought you must have got dead. And-where-is-the-present-you've-brang-me?"

When a public official asked me that night for my outstanding impression of the journey, I said without hesitation;

"How very few people live in this country!"

On previous runs from Seattle we had remarked the wide, vacant spaces and the room for settlement, but this time, by comparison, we seemed to have passed

through a region of intensive industry, large towns and dense population. We thought of the long days during the past month when, as our car had moved steadily westward, silence had fallen upon us, even our own voices failing in a sort of regretful impatience that our great Dominion of Canada, after fifty-five years, was still so unpeopled and untamed. Wearily our gaze would sweep the whole wide horizon in vain for a single monument to the hand of man. Then, on a sudden, conversation would awake, backs straighten, eyes brighten. Perhaps it was only a piece of farm machinery, grazing horses or a curl of smoke, but the very promise of a home seemed to rekindle the fire of hope, of faith in our great land.

Thus it is that the pioneer, forsaking the ties and comforts—perhaps, too, the deceits and cares—of luxury's lap, becomes not only a torch-bearer to himself, but a light of hope in the path of others.

When the school-boy—every vigorous school-boy—draws away from discipline because he yearns and aches to follow the soldier and the sailor, the conscientious teacher rebukes, the practical parent deplures, and charges up the deviltry to original sin. But like all else of original sin, the boy's truancy is only uncharted energy. It is in reality not the soldier and sailor which honest primal instinct bids him emulate, but the pioneer, the creator. Intuitively scorning protection of statute and convention, he wants a world where defence is strategy and a strong right arm. So he takes to building forts. He dreams of steering by his own hand through the ebb and flow of life's

tides; so he makes a raft and goes adventuring in obedience to an age-old instinct which tells him that home and school alone have not made the great world he inherits, nor the race of which he is the final product.

Later in life, once and again, he will ponder to himself that the rumble of iron wheels, the busy banks and the stately colleges are not in reality the genesis of this country in which he lives—alas! *on* which he lives. One day the blood of his ox-driving, empire-blazing progenitors stirs and stings him to battle. He revolts against the narrow limits of his sphere, which shuts in the clanging, the dollars and the bad air, and shuts out the mountain dew, the salt sea, the open road and the vagabondage that would make life free and individual. He feels suddenly that his clubs, his appointments—yes, even the lordly roof which covers him, are nothing but a slavish time-table, a miserable copy of thousands of other men's lives. He has the inspiration to chuck it all and to get away, alone, out ahead of the first wave of civilization, if possible; to find some mighty river and follow it up through strange, undiscovered country to its source.

It is the school-boy within him hankering to play he's a pioneer; a game that every red-blooded, high-spirited man wants to play, once and again.

When this vagary possesses you (for unfortunately a vagary it must be), and you feel, dear brother motorist, that you must have some relief for your drunken craving, just take your little car and wander away awhile, away from price-lists and people and private

codes, away from clubs and cares and cankering hates, into a strange land where each day starts life on its own account and the night cares for you where it finds you; a region into which you journey for nothing else than to make friends of winding roads, of bird-calls and of humble homes, and climb mountains for nothing else at all than to see what may be on the other side.

Of course you will have to come back again, back to the things called the world and work, to submit yourself again to times and fashions, and to grind out the weeks as they come and go in the realm of,

"An ordered land that broods on yesterday;  
Of hearts content with other years;  
A country old in time and tears;"

though, once and again, in the hours of perplexity, embarrassment or triumph, remembering how you played pioneer, your prisoned spirit will murmur,

"But Oh, my heart goes homesick back to-day,  
Back to the wide, free prairie's sweep,  
Back to the land that brought the sunset near,  
Back where the great, white Rockies sleep."

THE END.

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COMPLETE LOG OF "THE KING'S INTERNATIONAL  
HIGHWAY," MONTREAL TO VANCOUVER, AS  
LAID OUT BY PATHFINDER FOR THE  
VANCOUVER AUTOMOBILE CLUB.

## EXPLANATION.

H	Indicates	town	with	regularly-equipped	hotel.
HH	"	"	"	more than one	good hotel.
h	"	"	"	regular public	stopping-place.
G	"	"	"	garage.	
GG	"	"	"	more than one	garage.

Miles to Montreal		Miles to - Vancouver
0	MONTREAL ..... Pavement through Lachine, Dixie, Point Claire, Beaconsfield, to	3370
23	STE. ANNE DE BELLEVUE—H, GG ..... Ferry to Ile Perrot, and again to	3247
31	VAUDREUIL—H, G ..... Macadam through Lake of Two Mountains summer resorts, Hudson, Como, etc., to	3239
55	POINT FORTUNE—H, G ..... Ontario entered here. Poor road almost to	3215
66	HAWKESBURY—HH, GG ..... Pavement for six miles, then clay, sand and bad roads. Better after leaving Plantagenet to	3204
105	ROCKLAND—H, G ..... Roads good to poor and good into	3165
126	OTTAWA—HH, GG ..... From Ottawa roads pavement and all good to	3144
148	CARP—G ..... Excellent gravel to	3122
158	KINBURN—H, G ..... Continued good to	3112
162	GALETTA—H, G ..... Continued good to	3108
168	ARNPRIOR—HH, GG ..... Splendid road to Braeside, then fairly good to	3102

188	RENFREW—HH, GG .....	3082
	Quite good to	
206	COBDEN—h, G .....	3064
	Mostly sandy, though passable, even in wet weather. Rather a weak link here.	
224	PEMBROKE—Hh, GG .....	3046
	Excellent road to	
235	PETTAWAWA .....	3035
	Pavement through military camp; then little used sandy plain. Great care necessary to keep right road to	
246	CHALK RIVER—h .....	3024
	Make sure of gas supply here as you are entering the bad, sparsely settled area of 75 miles. Roads rough and bad to	
275	STONECLIFF—h .....	3093
	Roads very bad and uncomfortable. Dangerous to car unless driven with great care. Overgrown and bad sand, rocks, etc. Sometimes farms, then deserted country to	
296	DEUX RIVIERES—h .....	3074
	Few miles fair, near village; then ten miles uninhabited forest. Except in dry weather team should be along. Road under construction. Seek road advice frequently. This is the weak link in entire Highway.	
317	MATTAWA—Hh .....	3053
	Roads on whole good. Hard going in rain, but firm bottom to	
367	NORTH BAY—Hh, GG .....	3003
	Ten miles good, five fair, fifteen good to	
400	STURGEON FALLS—h, G .....	2970
	Roads very good.	
410	VERNER—h .....	2960
	Practically all first class to	
459	SUDBURY—Hh, GG .....	2911
	Nearly all good, but some tricky spots and dangerous to fast driving.	
540	CUTLER—h .....	2830
	The former "Missing Link"—now a well-made and fast road to	
557	ALGOMA .....	2813
	Good roads. Farming and wild.	

565	BLIND RIVER—hh, G .....	2805
	Roads good. Country improved.	
	THESSALON—Hh, GG .....	
	Roads all good and fine country to	
656	SAULT STE. MARIE—HH, GG .....	2714
	Ferry to	
	SAULT STE. MARIE, MICHIGAN—HH, GG ....	
	These cities offer country club, golf, auto club, commercial clubs, etc. Most interesting cities historically and commercially. Thirty miles good, then rough clay, and pieces of gravel. Seventeen miles across open, rough sandy plain. Uninteresting country to	
714	TROUT LAKE .....	2656
	Mostly poor to	
726	REXTON—h .....	2644
	Fair and poor sand; improving, with twelve miles good to.	
751	NEWBERRY—Hh, GG .....	2619
	Sixteen miles good, thirteen poor, then balance good into.	
810	MANISTIQUE—HH, GG .....	2560
	First-class roads of the Michigan peninsula now everywhere.	
880	ESCANABA—HH, GG .....	2490
	All roads splendid through iron country, and for the next 250 miles.	
935	IRON MOUNTAIN—HH, GG .....	2435
	Scenery all through here very fine. Rolling like Quebec. Road dips into Wisconsin for twenty miles to	
950	FLORENCE, WIS.—H, G .....	2420
	The iron country is broken here by forest area with sparse population, and somewhat monotonous.	
1047	MARIENESCO—h, G .....	2323
	Roads all excellent. Opening out to	
1077	IRONWOOD AND BESSEMER—HH, GG .....	2293
	Very busy centres. Cross river to	
1079	HURLEY, WIS.—HH, GG .....	2291
	Roads mostly good; some not so fast, with more farming to	

1104	MELLON—Hh, GG .....	2266
	Roads good and scenery very pleasing.	
1135	ASHLAND—HH, GG .....	2235
	Avoid if desired by turning left before entering city. Streets of Ashland disgraceful in 1920. Roads out ten miles good, then hilly desert twenty miles, with bad sand to	
1164	IRON RIVER—Hh, GG .....	2206
	Roads fair, except last ten miles to	
1206	SUPERIOR—HH, GG .....	2164
	Cross end of Lake Superior by toll bridge into	
1209	DULUTH, MINN.—HH, GG .....	2161
	Roads the best; country only fairly interesting to	
1251	FLOODWOOD—h, G .....	2119
	Good, clay, fair and rough. Country of good farms and wild to	
1293	GRAND RAPIDS .....	2077
	Get advice as to best road to Cass Lake. Road via Federal Dam, eight miles perfect, fifteen bad from construction, ten clay, bad mud-holes, thirty-eight through forest Reserve, from bad to fair. Turn right with railway into	
1365	CASS LAKE—Hh, GG .....	2005
	The poorest roads in Minnesota around here. Very poor, bad sand and rough to pavement.	
1383	BIMIJI—HH, GG .....	2005
	Fashionable and beautiful resort. Roosevelt Highway has been followed to here. Henceforth Jefferson Highway (well sign-posted) to Winnipeg. Roads out of Bimiji still poor, but passable.	
1414	BAGLEY—H, GG .....	1956
	May be necessary to leave Jefferson Highway here. Roads of fair clay and improving to the very best. Country has become beautiful; flat farms.	
1466	RED LAKE FALLS—HH, GG .....	1904
	Roads all good to	

1488	THIEF RIVER FALLS—Hh, GG .....	1832
	After this road leaves populated district no villages for fifty miles, getting to Pembina Trail and fine open prairie country, with roads picturesque and fast. Norwegian.	
1532	KARLSTAD—h, G .....	1838
	Roads mostly hard and fast, though at points quite primitive.	
1548	BRONSON .....	1822
	Roads same.	
1586	NOYES, MINN., and EMERSON, MAN. ....	1784
	Stop at Customs. Cross Red River and follow its west bank for sixty-eight miles of perfect dry-weather road, twelve pavement into	
1654	WINNIPEG—HH, GG .....	1716
	Roads out of Winnipeg eleven miles pavement, then smooth, fast clay to	
1712	PORTAGE LA PRAIRIE—HH, GG .....	1658
	Few miles good, then poor, sandy, hilly road and good to	
1766	CARBERRY—Hh, GG .....	1604
	Special road sign-posted to Brandon, over fast gravel and good prairie, winding trail.	
1798	BRANDON—HH, GG .....	1572
	Practically all good gravel roads and amazingly pretty scenery to	
1851	VIRDEN—H, GG .....	1519
	All roads to western Manitoba border good, and farms with trees through	
1873	ELKHORN—H, GG .....	1497
	Bad from Saskatchewan border into	
1903	MOOSOMIN, SASK.—Hh, GG .....	1467
	Poor and fair roads to	
	WAPELLA, and from that town worst on the prairie, but road-work in progress to	
	WHITEWOOD—h, G .....	
	Roads improving to	
1958	BROADVIEW—Hh, GG .....	1410
	Roads bad to fair, but below par for the next seventy-five miles.	

1978	GRENFELL—H, GG .....	1390
1993	WOLSELEY—H, GG .....	1377
2003	SINTALUTA—Hh, GG .....	1365
2015	INDIAN HEAD—H, GG .....	1355
2025	QU'APPELLE—H, GG .....	1345
	Fair and good roads into	
2064	REGINA—HH, GG .....	1306
	Good, high-crowned dry-weather road, over rich, treeless country to	
2109	MOOSE JAW—HH, GG .....	1261
	Roads falling off but still good. Some sand to	
2141	MORTLACH .....	1229
	Roads becoming very bad. Enquire for best route. Pathfinder followed sandy plain twenty miles across. Practically unin- habited to	
	SECRETAN .....	
	Still primitive trails and bad to	
2169	CHAPLIN—h, G .....	1201
	A well-graded section out of here which proves to be old railway grade. Fair, some fast, and poor, rough to	
2199	HERBERT—h, GG .....	1171
	Enquire for best road. Roads much better into	
2230	SWIFT CURRENT—HH, GG .....	1140
	Roads west very badly rutted and uncared for. Worst for some time.	
2250	WEBB—h, G .....	1120
	Still bad roads. Country from Swift Current for 125 miles uninteresting, range lands or treeless farms. Not much population.	
2267	GULL LAKE—H, GG .....	1103
2287	TOMPKINS—h, G .....	1084
	Trail over bare, low hills.	
2304	PIAPOT .....	1066
	Some better roads.	
2326	MAPLE CREEK—Hh, GG .....	1044
	Roads better. Some dragged.	

2349	HATTON .....	1027
	Very bad roads again. No attempt to improve until Alberta line is reached. Then good, new road to	
2376	IRVINE, ALBERTA .....	994
	Range country. German settlers. Good roads to	
2401	MEDICINE HAT—HH, GG .....	969
	Roads good. More interesting country.	
2442	BOW ISLAND—h, G .....	928
	Roads good.	
2458	GRASSY LAKE—h, G .....	912
	Roads good except for five or ten miles unmade, about midway to	
2478	TABOR—Hh, GG .....	892
	Roads good to	
2516	LETHBRIDGE—HH, GG .....	854
	Through "coulee" of Belly or Lethbridge River, and over good road and farm country.	
2551	MACLEOD—HH, GG .....	819
	Past R.N.W.M.P. Barracks, and through Indian Reservation over good and fair trail and rough clay roads to	
2580	PINCHER—H, G .....	790
	Roads are poorest in Alberta, through "coulees" and hills until quite surrounded by mountains. Past some deserted mines and villages to	
2608	FRANK SLIDE .....	762
	No proper road has been built here, but the cleared way is easily passable. But exercise care.	
2611	BLAIRMORE .....	759
	Roads rough through series of mining villages to	
2615	COLEMAN—hh, G .....	755
	Roads better, and culminating in a spectacular road round Crow's Nest Lake. Scenery very grand. Drive very carefully around lake and keep passing points well in mind. There is not room to pass elsewhere, but passing places are frequent.	

2624	CROW'S NEST STATION .....	746
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THE GREAT DIVIDE (Altitude 4450 feet)

You are now in British Columbia, and roads are first class, but must be negotiated moderately owing to numerous quick turns. Immediately leaving Crow's Nest up short steep hill, and watch very carefully for vehicles meeting you. This is the narrowest road in the Pass. Follow river along with the railroad to

2633	MICHEL—h .....	737
	and	

2635	NATAL—h. ....	735
	Road turns south over splendid roads to	

2649	HOSMER—h .....	721
	and	

2657	FERNIE—HH, GG .....	713
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Any needed repairs should be attended to here. Fernie is the capital of the district Road on from here is best scenery on the whole Highway. Beware of many sharp turns. Morrissey Hill, ten miles from Fernie, steepest to be negotiated.

2678	ELKO—h .....	692
	Very good roads still to	

2719	CRANBROOK—HH, GG .....	651
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Road turns south here for the Idaho border. Follow Spalding's Guide Book instructions closely, as the road is sometimes steep and narrow, with very sharp turns on the hills, and great care should be exercised on the roads around Moyie as anywhere in the mountains.

MOYIE.

Roads do not improve towards the border, Although extensive work was going on in 1920, but any "nervous" places are now behind you.

2761	KINGSGATE, B.C.—	
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	EASTHOPE, IDAHO—h .....	609
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The roads for twenty miles are very bad; rough and dusty, with some good into

2791	BONNER'S FERRY—Hh, GG .....	579
	Roads and country getting better all the time now.	
2828	SANDPOINT—HH, GG .....	542
	Roads good, but terribly dusty for a good many miles; then improving to perfect approaching	
2895	SPOKANE—HH, GG .....	475
	Hotel Davenport, one of America's best. All roads from Spokane of a high order	
2932	DAVENPORT—HH, GG .....	438
	The nature of the country now falls off to practically a desert for almost 200 miles.	
2947	HARRINGTON—h, G .....	423
	Roads still good.	
2973	ODESSA .....	397
	Roads good; then very bad for the last bad roads on the "King's International Highway."	
2992	MARLIN (Formerly Krupp)—h, GG .....	378
	A veritable little oasis; then drive amongst curious rock formations, dry except near the irrigation creek to	
3021	SOAP LAKE—HH, GG .....	349
	Famous health resort and good bathing.	
3065	COLUMBIA RIVER appears many hundred feet below. Fine views. Descend to the river by beautiful wide road, winding down cliffs for some miles to	
3072	VANTAGE FERRY—H .....	298
	Hospitable private hotel the only building here. Ferry fee \$1. Out of River valley by magnificent winding road through alkali, rocky country, passing some irrigated farms until a beautiful, well-watered valley is in sight. This is	
3104	ELLENSBURG—HH, GG .....	266
	Out of here through more desert, but always over splendid roads to good country at	

3135	CLE ELUM—H, GG .....	235
	This is the beginning of the Snoqualomie Pass. Ten miles out some eight per cent. grade is encountered; then over magnificent boulevard road with almost imperceptible grades to Lake Keechelas. Then a mile or two steady, but easy up grade, to	
3170	SUMMIT—G .....	200
	It is difficult to realize you have arrived. Road immediately starts down by series of steps on which engines eastbound are likely to overheat, but water is of course frequent.	
3193	NORTH BEND—Hh, GG .....	177
3198	SNOQUALOMIE FALLS .....	172
3203	FALLS CITY .....	167
	All perfect roads.	
3223	KIRKLAND—h, GG (Ferry to Seattle) .....	147
	Roads are all paved to	
3247	EVERETT—HH, GG .....	133
	Pavement to	
3293	MOUNT VERNON—Hh, GG .....	77
	Fair road to	
3312	BELLINGHAM—HH, GG .....	58
	Pavement through FERNDAL to	
3338	BLAINE—Hh, GG .....	32
	Customs here for British Columbia. Good road and pavement to	
3356	NEW WESTMINSTER—Hh, GG .....	12
	Pavement to	
3369	VANCOUVER—HH, GG .....	0

## ROAD STANDARDS

The average road standards encountered on "The King's International Highway" through the various Provinces and States are estimated:

Province of Quebec .....	90%	perfect roads.	
" " Ontario .....	45	" "	
State of Michigan .....	75	" "	
" " Wisconsin .....	65	" "	
" " Minnesota .....	55	" "	
Province of Manitoba .....	65	" "	
" " Alberta .....	55	" "	
" " Saskatchewan .	35	" "	
" " British Columbia	80	" "	
State of Idaho .....	60	" "	....
State of Washington .....	85	" "	





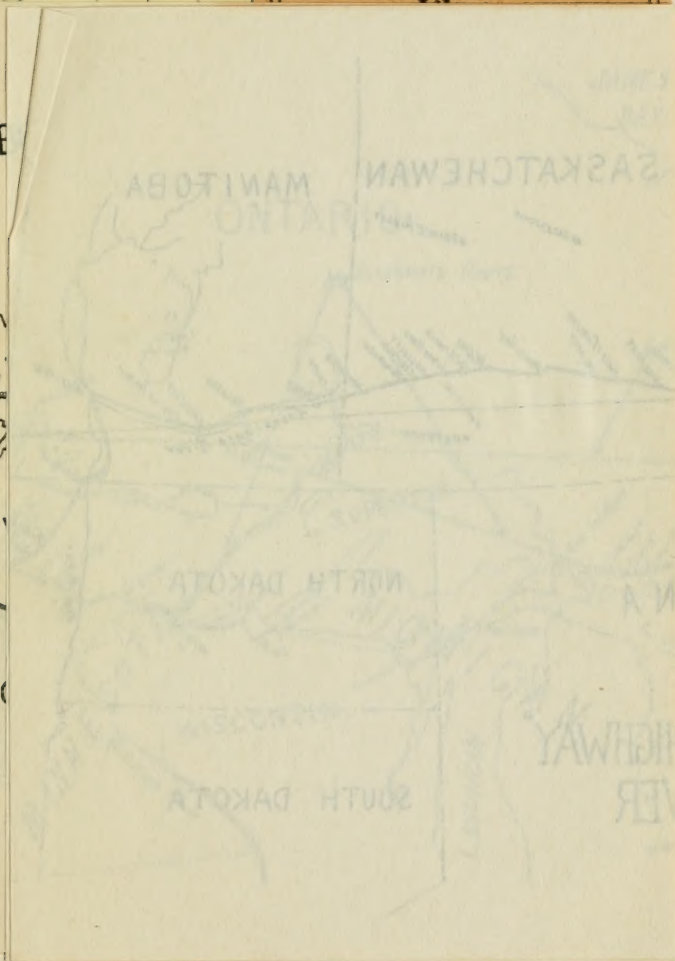


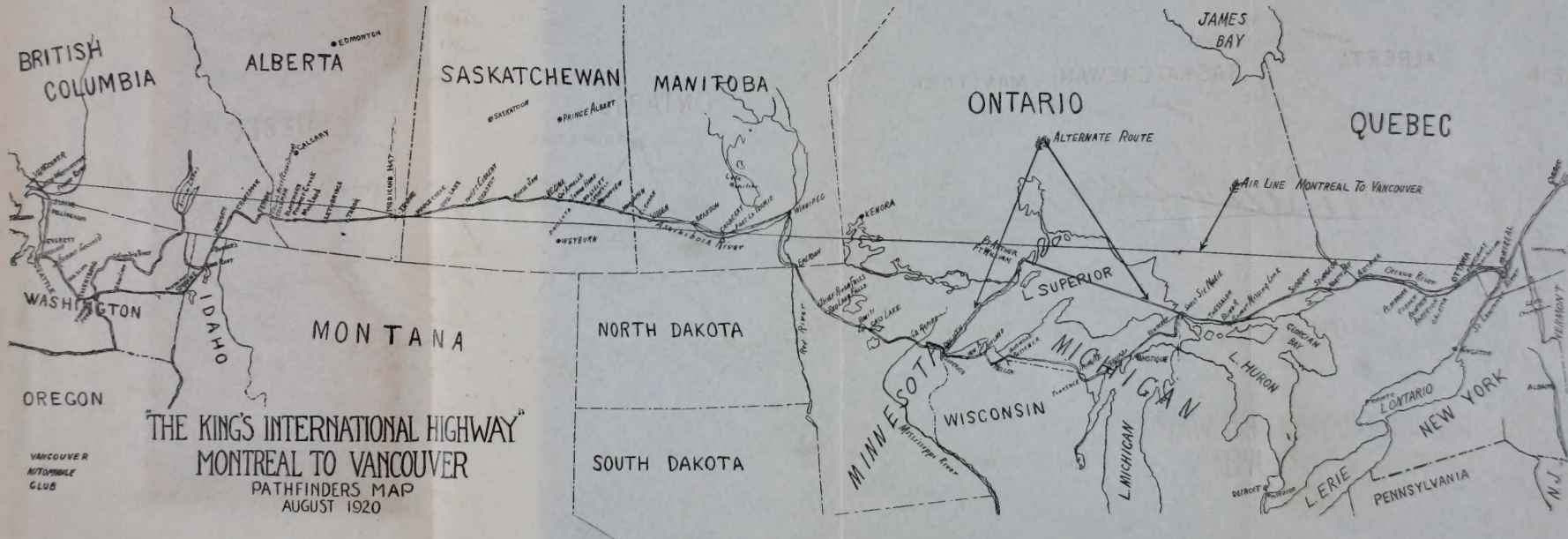


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"THE KING'S INTERNATIONAL HIGHWAY"  
MONTREAL TO VANCOUVER  
PATHFINDERS MAP  
AUGUST 1920

VANCOUVER  
MOTORBOAT  
CLUB

194518

Author Gomery, Percy

HC  
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Title a motor scamper 'cross Canada.

DATE.

Feb 24/25

NAME OF BORROWER.

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